

CJ 560 Final Project Guidelines and Rubric

Overview

The final project for this course is the creation of a presentation on a controversial court case. The final project represents an authentic demonstration of competency because the ability to communicate effectively with others in the criminal justice field and related fields will be important to your success as a criminal justice professional. This presentation should showcase your ability to communicate clearly and effectively. The project is divided into **two milestones**, which will be submitted at various points throughout the course to scaffold learning and ensure quality final submission. These milestones will be submitted in **Modules Three and Six**. The final project will be submitted in **Module Nine**.

In this assignment, you will demonstrate your mastery of the following course outcomes:

- Construct clear and accurate criminal justice timelines from the alleged commission of a crime through the sentencing and appeals phases
- Compare and contrast criminal procedure with civil procedure in addressing issues in local, state, or federal courts
- Assess the equality of the judicial process in controversial court cases for determining how the process could have been administered more impartially
- Defend, with evidence, positions on controversial topics in the trial-court and post-verdict phases, using clear and effective communication
- Evaluate roles of criminal justice professionals for their relevance to courts and the judicial process

Prompt

Choose a controversial court case in which the judicial process created civil unrest and discord or was otherwise the subject of national media scrutiny, and that aligns with your educational and professional interests in criminal justice. First, discuss the facts, the legal issues, the judicial proceedings, the procedural history, and the holding(s) of the court case. Next, identify and analyze the underlying cause(s) of the controversy related to the court case. Then explore whether the courts could have taken any alternative courses of direction that would have remedied the situation more appropriately and effectively. Finally, conclude with your perspective on what this court case illustrates about the role of criminal justice professionals in the criminal justice system, along with the workings of courts and the judicial process more generally.

Below are a list of criminal cases that you may choose from (you may choose another case with instructor approval):

- O. J. Simpson Murder Trial
- Martha Stewart White-Collar Crime/Insider Trading/Conspiracy-Obstruction of Justice Trial
- Emmett Till Murder Trial
- Jeffrey Skilling/Kenneth Lay Securities Fraud/Wire Fraud/Insider Trading Trial
- Charles Manson Murder Trial

Remember that you are developing this presentation for your supervisor; your goal should be to demonstrate superior analysis and communication skills. As this is a self-sustaining presentation, you will need to include speaker notes or a transcript. Although not a requirement, producing an audio recording or a video recording with audio is highly recommended, as oral and visual presentation are key communication skills for criminal justice professionals.

Specifically, the following **critical elements** must be addressed:

I. Introduction

- A. **Overview of Case:** Provide a brief overview of your selected controversial court case in which the judicial process created civil unrest and discord or was otherwise the subject of national media scrutiny. In other words, describe the case as a whole, providing a broad sense of the context of the case.
- B. **Selection of Case:** Explain how this case is relevant to you, as a criminal justice professional. In other words, why did you select this particular court case? What makes this case interesting to you professionally?

II. Background of the Case

- A. **Facts:** Provide a clear, succinct, and accurate summary of the key facts of the case. For instance, on what date(s) did the crime occur? Who was involved? What weapon was used (if there was one)?
- B. **Timeline:** Develop a clear, accurate timeline of your controversial court case that summarizes the decision of the court. Specifically, the timeline of your case should include:
 - 1. The legal issues
 - 2. The judicial proceedings
 - 3. The procedural history
 - 4. The holding(s)
- C. **Verdict:** Defend, with evidence, your position on the court's verdict. In other words, did the court issue the most appropriate verdict in the case? Why or why not? Ensure that you communicate your defense clearly and effectively.
- D. **Type of Court:** Explain where (local, state, or federal court) the case was tried, specifically including whether the case was tried in civil court as well as criminal court. Why was the case tried in civil court, or why was it not?
- E. **Similarities:** Explain the similarities between the procedures in the criminal trial that occurred and the procedures in a civil trial (whether actual or potential) for your case.
- F. **Differences:** Explain the differences between the procedures in the criminal trial that occurred and the procedures in a civil trial (whether actual or potential) for your case.

III. Causes of Controversy

- A. **Media Coverage:** Assess the impact of media coverage of the case on the judicial process. For instance, how did the news media shape public perception of the case? How did this, in turn, affect the court proceedings? Or, how did the selection of photographs and videos used by the media impact public opinion and the judicial process?
- B. **Fairness:** Assess the fairness of the administration of the judicial process in your case. In other words, how fair and equitable was the judicial process? Why did the judicial process cause such a controversy?

IV. **Reaction to Controversy**

- A. **Reaction Explanation:** Explain the reaction by the criminal justice court system, the media, and local, state, or national politicians to the perceived equality of the judicial process, supporting your response with specific examples. For instance, were politicians acting in a way that caused bias? Did local media provide objective coverage of the case? Did national media demonstrate sufficient, in-depth knowledge of the facts?
- B. **Reaction Defense:** Justify, with evidence, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the court system's reaction to the controversy during the trial. Ensure that you communicate your justification clearly and effectively.
- C. **Alternatives Explanation:** How could the court system have responded more appropriately and effectively to the controversy during and after the trial? In other words, what alternative courses of direction could the court system have taken? How could the judicial system have worked in a more fair and ethical way?
- D. **Alternatives Defense:** Defend, with evidence, your conclusions about how the court system could have taken an alternative course of direction that might have remedied the situation more appropriately and effectively. Ensure that you communicate your defense clearly and effectively.

V. **Conclusion**

- A. **Professional Role:** What does this court case illustrate about the role of criminal justice professionals and the operation of the criminal justice court system?
- B. **Systemic Reforms:** Based on your analysis of the controversial court case, explain whether larger, systemic reforms of the criminal justice system and the criminal justice profession are necessary, and what such reforms may be. What evidence do you have to support your conclusions?

Milestones

Milestone One: Draft of Background

In **Module Three**, you will submit a draft of the Background portion of your final project. **This milestone will be graded with the Milestone One Rubric.**

Milestone Two: Causes and Reaction to Controversy

In **Module Six**, you will submit the Causes of Controversy and Reaction to Controversy portions of your final project. **This milestone will be graded with the Milestone Two Rubric.**

Final Submission: Presentation

In **Module Nine**, you will submit your final project. It should be a complete, polished artifact containing **all** of the critical elements of the final project. It should reflect the incorporation of feedback gained throughout the course. **This submission will be graded with the Final Project Rubric.**

Final Project Rubric

Guidelines for Submission: Your presentation must include speaker notes or a transcript. Audio and video are strongly encouraged because of the importance of communication in the criminal justice profession. Your presentation should have 12–15 slides, although this is a minimum requirement; depending on the controversial court case you select, you may need more slides to comprehensively analyze your court case. You should use current APA style guidelines for your citations and reference list.

Critical Elements	Exemplary (100%)	Proficient (90%)	Needs Improvement (70%)	Not Evident (0%)	Value
Introduction: Overview of Case	Meets “Proficient” criteria and response expertly balances necessary detail with brevity	Provides brief overview of selected controversial court case in which judicial process created civil unrest and discord or was subject of national media scrutiny	Provides overview of selected controversial court case in which judicial process created civil unrest and discord or was subject of national media scrutiny, but response is wordy or lacks clarity	Does not provide overview of selected controversial court case in which judicial process created civil unrest and discord or was subject of national media scrutiny	6.4
Introduction: Selection of Case	Meets “Proficient” criteria and explanation demonstrates keen insight into roles of criminal justice professionals	Explains how court case is relevant to self as a criminal justice professional	Explains how court case is relevant to self as a criminal justice professional but with gaps in clarity	Does not explain how court case is relevant to self as a criminal justice professional	6.4
Background: Facts	Meets “Proficient” criteria and summary insightfully captures the key facts that are most relevant to the outcome of the case	Provides clear, succinct, and accurate summary of the key facts of the case	Provides a summary of the facts of the case, but summary has gaps in clarity or accuracy, is wordy, or includes unnecessary information	Does not provide a summary of the facts of the case	6.4
Background: Timeline	Meets “Proficient” criteria and timeline demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the progress of a case through the judicial system	Develops clear, accurate timeline that summarizes the court’s decision, including the legal issues, the judicial proceedings, the procedural history, and the holding(s)	Develops timeline that summarizes the court’s decision, including the legal issues, the judicial proceedings, the procedural history, and the holding(s), but timeline lacks clarity, accuracy, or detail	Does not develop timeline that summarizes the court’s decision	6.4
Background: Verdict	Meets “Proficient” criteria and defense of position on verdict is exceptionally well-supported	Clearly and effectively defends, with evidence, position on court’s verdict	Defends, with evidence, position on court’s verdict, but with gaps in clarity, effectiveness, or logic	Does not defend, with evidence, position on court’s verdict	6.4

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Background: Type of Court	Meets “Proficient” criteria and explanation demonstrates keen insight into how issues are addressed in court	Explains where (local, state, or federal court) the case was tried, specifically addressing whether or not the case was tried in civil court as well as criminal court	Explains where (local, state, or federal court) the case was tried, specifically addressing whether or not the case was tried in civil court as well as criminal court, but explanation is cursory or inaccurate	Does not explain where (local, state, or federal court) the case was tried	6.4
Background: Similarities	Meets “Proficient” criteria and demonstrates a nuanced understanding of specific similarities between criminal and civil procedures	Explains the similarities between the procedures in the criminal trial that occurred and the procedures in a civil trial (whether actual or potential) for case	Explains the similarities between the procedures in the criminal trial that occurred and the procedures in a civil trial (whether actual or potential) for case, but with gaps in detail	Does not explain the similarities between the procedures in the criminal trial that occurred and the procedures in a civil trial (whether actual or potential) for case	6.4
Background: Differences	Meets “Proficient” criteria and demonstrates a nuanced understanding of specific differences between criminal and civil procedures	Explains the differences between the procedures in the criminal trial that occurred and the procedures in a civil trial (whether actual or potential) for case	Explains the differences between the procedures in the criminal trial that occurred and the procedures in a civil trial (whether actual or potential) for case, but with gaps in detail	Does not explain the differences between the procedures in the criminal trial that occurred and the procedures in a civil trial (whether actual or potential) for case	6.4
Causes: Media Coverage	Meets “Proficient” criteria and demonstrates keen insight into impact of media coverage on courts and the judicial process	Assesses the impact of media coverage of the case on the judicial process	Assesses the impact of media coverage of the case on the judicial process, but response lacks sufficient detail or has gaps in logic	Does not assess the impact of media coverage of the case on the judicial process	4.8
Causes: Fairness	Meets “Proficient” criteria and demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the judicial process	Assesses the fairness of the administration of the judicial process of the case	Assesses the fairness of the administration of the judicial process of the case, but with gaps in detail or logic	Does not assess the fairness of the administration of the judicial process of the case.	4.8
Reaction: Reaction Explanation	Meets “Proficient” criteria and demonstrates keen insight into equality of judicial process in controversial court cases	Explains the reaction by the criminal justice court system, the media, and local, state, or national politicians to the perceived equality of the judicial process, supporting response with specific examples	Explains the reaction by the criminal justice court system, the media, and local, state, or national politicians to the perceived equality of the judicial process, but with gaps in detail or support	Does not explain the reaction by the criminal justice court system, the media, and local, state, or national politicians to the perceived equality of the judicial process	4.8

Reaction: Reaction Defense	Meets “Proficient” criteria and justification of court system’s reaction is exceptionally well-supported	Clearly and effectively justifies, with evidence, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the court system’s reaction to the controversy	Justifies, with evidence, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the court system’s reaction to the controversy, but with gaps in clarity, effectiveness, or logic	Does not justify, with evidence, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the court system’s reaction to the controversy	6.4
Reaction: Alternatives Explanation	Meets “Proficient” criteria and response demonstrates creativity and original thinking in exploring how the judicial system could have worked in a more equitable way	Determines how the court system could have responded more appropriately and effectively to the controversy during and after the trial	Determines how the court system could have responded more appropriately and effectively to the controversy during and after the trial, but response has gaps in detail, clarity, or logic	Does not determine how the court system could have responded more appropriately and effectively to the controversy during and after the trial	4.8
Reaction: Alternatives Defense	Meets “Proficient” criteria and defense of alternative courses of direction is exceptionally well-supported	Clearly and effectively defends, with evidence, conclusions about how court system could have taken an alternative course of direction that might have remedied the situation more appropriately and effectively	Defends, with evidence, conclusions about how court system could have taken an alternative course of direction that might have remedied the situation more appropriately and effectively, but with gaps in clarity, effectiveness, or logic	Does not defend, with evidence, conclusions about how court system could have taken an alternative course of direction that might have remedied the situation more appropriately and effectively	6.4
Conclusion: Professional Role	Meets “Proficient” criteria and demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the everyday professional lives of criminal justice professionals vis-à-vis the criminal justice system	Explains what this court case illustrates about the role of criminal justice professionals and the operation of the criminal justice court system	Explains what this court case illustrates about the role of criminal justice professionals and the operation of the criminal justice court system, but explanation lacks detail or is missing key information	Does not explain what this court case illustrates about the role of criminal justice professionals and the operation of the criminal justice court system	6.4
Conclusion: Systemic Reforms	Meets “Proficient” criteria and provides substantial evidence from reliable sources to support conclusions regarding systemic reforms	Explains whether larger, systemic reforms of the criminal justice system and the criminal justice profession are necessary and what such reforms may be, supporting explanation with evidence from analysis of controversial court case	Explains whether larger, systemic reforms of the criminal justice system and the criminal justice profession are necessary and what such reforms may be, but with gaps in detail or support	Does not explain whether larger, systemic reforms of the criminal justice system and the criminal justice profession are necessary	6.4

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Articulation of Response	Submission is free of errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, and organization and is presented in a professional and easy-to-read format	Submission has no major errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization	Submission has major errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization that negatively impact readability and articulation of main ideas	Submission has critical errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization that prevent understanding of ideas	4
Total				100%	