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Introduction to Criminal Justice (CRJ 161) City as Classroom Project Report

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City as Classroom Project: CRJ 161: Introduction to Criminal Justice



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Course Description

This course is designed to provide a survey of the discipline, including its use of social sciences and law in understanding the phenomena of crime and justice and how the two relate. Further it explores criminal justice theory and processes, as well as the roles of ideology, politics, and mass media in shaping crime policy. Lastly, it seeks to foster deeper perspectives on how justice—for individuals as well as for society—relates to intensely human experiences like freedom and suffering.

Project Description

For this assignment students were required to visit and tour Eastern State Penitentiary (ESP). After the tour students were expected to write a paper describing what they witnessed along with examining the historical significance of ESP, specifically focusing on the approach, forms and goals of the punishments used.

Student Feedback

Student comments about the visit were overwhelmingly positive. They described the tour as “interesting”, “fascinating”, “intriguing”, “reflective”, “extremely beneficial”, and a “living history lesson”. Additionally, one student noted that visit to Eastern State Penitentiary helped him/her “understand the concepts studied in class” and another mentioned it provided him/her with “new insights on prison conditions”. Lastly, a significant number of students commented they were happy they went and would recommend it to others.

Outcomes

Students were expected to connect and analyze the relationships between the physical design of Eastern State Penitentiary with the purposes, goals and philosophies of the penitentiary era (and how they related and influence current correctional administration).

Lessons Learned

Students were given tickets (funded via City as Classroom) and expected to tour ESP on their own time, consequently often individually. In the future I think touring the site as a class might prove more useful as it could provide additional opportunities to connect the material to broader themes covered in class.

Although it was not a stated goal or outcomes of the project, by focusing on the approach to punishment (extreme isolation) and the problems associated, students learned about a broader issue within in criminal justice and penal administration - how well intended polices can have unintended negative consequences.