

Special Topics Course Descriptions
Winter 2026

Undergraduate

CJ 340 IL ST: Social Media and Video in Criminal Justice (with Stephen Morreale)

This course examines the transformative role of social media platforms and video technologies in modern criminal justice operations, focusing on both investigative applications and community engagement. Students will explore how law enforcement agencies leverage digital platforms for investigations, evidence collection, and public outreach while addressing related legal and ethical considerations. *(3 credits)*

CJ 340 IL2 ST: Cybercrime Investigations (with Mark Beaudry)

This is a comprehensive course for investigating cybercrime as law enforcement, private organizations, regulatory agencies, or individual victims. It provides material about cybercrime's technological, legal, and practical aspects of conducting cybercrime investigations. *(3 credits)*

CJ 340 IL3 ST: Mass Shootings (with Francis Olive)

This course provides an interdisciplinary analysis of mass shootings, examining their causes, perpetrators, and impact through criminological, psychological, sociological, and policy perspectives. Students will explore historical trends, case studies, shooter profiles, and contributing factors such as radicalization, social media, and firearm access. The course will also discuss prevention strategies, policy responses, and ethical considerations in media coverage. *(3 credits)*

CJ 340 IL4 ST: Sexual Offenses (with Robert Brooks)

This course explores the criminal justice system's regulation of consensual and nonconsensual sexual behavior, with an emphasis on the legal and sociocultural context within which sexual offenses are defined and prosecuted. Attention is also paid to sexual offenses committed by professionals within the criminal justice system. *(3 credits)*

SO 299 IL ST: Media and Society (with Cara Powers)

This course examines the relationship between media and society, focusing on how institutions such as journalism, education, entertainment, and social media shape public understanding of social issues. Students will analyze the ways media conveys, distorts, or omits information and consider alternative approaches that promote more equitable representations. *(3 credits)*

SO 299 IL2 ST: Sociology of Mental Health (with Corrine Stocking)

This course explores the social dimensions of mental health and illness, examining how cultural meanings, social structures, and institutions shape definitions, experiences, and treatments of mental health. Topics include stigma, inequality, medicalization, and the role of families, communities, and policy in shaping mental health outcomes. *(3 credits)*

Graduate

EN 998 IL Massachusetts Memoirs (with Heather Treseler)

Massachusetts has been a hive of literary activity since its beginnings, and it remains one of the most educated and literate states in the nation. This course focuses on memoirs by writers who have written about their lives in Massachusetts and featured its settings in their accounts and on relevant theories of autobiography. Thus, we will consider how the particularities of place—as well as class, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and religious belief—inform representations of identity in the work of contemporary writers Danzy Senna (*Where Did You Sleep Last Night?*), Isaac Fitzgerald (*Dirtbag, Massachusetts*), Vidyan Ravinthiran (*Asian/Other: Life, Poems, and the Problem of Memoir*), Caroline Knapp (*Pack of Two*), and Michael Patrick MacDonald (*All Souls: A Family Story from Southie*).

We will also consider excerpts from twentieth-century narratives by Miriam Levine (*Devotion*), Malcolm X (*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*), and Elizabeth Bishop (“The Country Mouse”) that focus specifically on writers’ experiences of Boston and Worcester.

The course includes written lectures and discussion prompts from the instructor; students’ weekly discussion posts and exchanges with classmates and the instructor; a final paper proposal; and a seminar-length (6-8 page) paper due at the end of the course. The instructor offers weekly optional Zoom cafes for additional discussion and individual consultations for course assignments. (3 credits)