

Department of Justice, Law and Society
Master' Comprehensive Examination
Justice and Public Policy
Summer 2006

Instructions: Answer any two of the following six questions. Include in your answers references to the relevant literature, case law and other sources. Label each answer by topic and number. Please begin each answer on a new page. Remember to write your 4-digit ID number on all pages.

Corrections:

1. Comment on the authenticity and implications of the following observation on prison life rendered by the novelist and essayist, John Edgar Wideman:

"Prison time must be hard time, a metaphorical death, a sustained, twilight condition of death-in-life...Yet the little death of a prison sentence doesn't quite kill the prisoner, because prisons, in spite of their ability to make the inmate's life unbearable, can't kill time... Life goes on and since it does, miracles occur."

2. Prison riots, though they are terrible tragedies when they occur, are statistically infrequent events. Why don't prisoners riot more often? In your answer discuss the following: (a) sources of control that operate in prison to maintain the relatively high degree of order in the prison community on any given day (b) conditions that undermine stability (such as crowding) and (c) the process or processes by which order breaks down, resulting in riots.

Policing:

1. Egon Bittner once wrote that the reason we have the police is because, "something-ought-not-to-be-happening-about-which-something-ought-to-be-done-*now!*" What does Bittner mean by this and how are his statements a justification for police? How are the police held accountable? What are the alternatives to having a public police force? Please cite relevant literature in answer these questions.

2. Several writers have stressed the importance of discretion in police decision making. Some say that it should be more structured, others say it is too structured. What are the central considerations in finding a proper balance? Citing leading authorities on the exercise of discretion in the criminal justice system, assess the exercise of discretion in policing. What empirical evidence has been presented to enlighten the debate?

Justice and Public Policy:

1. Many legislatures have passed “three strikes and you’re out” laws to deal with crime and the public’s fear of crime. What are the primary strengths and weaknesses of such laws? What research evidence supports these arguments?
2. Describe the central thesis of Sampson and Wilson’s “Toward a theory of race, crime, and urban inequality.” Then, integrating other readings in the area of justice and public policy, expand on Sampson and Wilson’s discussion of the role of government policies in the deterioration of the urban core and explain how aspects of the justice system may also have effects on the urban core similar to those they discuss.