

DEPARTMENT OF VICTIM STUDIES

Chair: Shelly Clevenger, Ph.D. (shc167@shsu.edu)

Department of Victim Studies

Telephone: 936-294-4735

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Department of Victim Studies (<https://www.shsu.edu/academics/victim-studies/>)

About

Be a part of the new, path-breaking Department of Victim Studies, the only one of its kind in the nation! The Department is home to the Master of Science in Victim Services Management (MSVSM) program, one of the most innovative criminal justice programs available in the United States.

The Master of Science in Victim Services Management program remains a leader in providing high-quality education to students in the field of victim services and has broad application to policy analysts, program administrators, and direct service providers. Through a rigorous online curriculum developed and delivered by experienced faculty, the program is committed to promoting professionalism in victim services nationwide. Students earning this advanced degree will be educated on evidence-based best practices to provide more optimal programming for victims of crime.

Faculty include renowned victimology scholars and esteemed victim service professionals with a combination of extensive education and field experience. Online graduate programs in the College of Criminal Justice have been consistently ranked among the top criminal justice programs in the United States. The MSVSM program is acknowledged in this distinguished ranking.

Mission

The MSVSM program is committed to providing high-quality instruction to students in the field of victim services. Its goal is to produce a population of leaders prepared to administer quality programs based on a solid understanding of industry trends and evidence-based practices.

As a graduate student in the Victim Studies Department at SHSU, you will:

- Learn from renowned victimology scholars and faculty with extensive field experience
- Enroll in courses that are National Advocate Credentialing Program-approved
- Have exposure to service-learning opportunities
- Have access to academic advising services and a job and information portal

Contact Information:

General Information on the Department of Victim Studies: Mayra Pena (mxp159@shsu.edu), 936-294-4735

General Information on the College of CCJ graduate programs: Arianna Longino (abl033@shsu.edu), Graduate Coordinator, 936-294-1695

Department of Victim Studies Administration: Shelly Clevenger (shc167@shsu.edu), Professor and Department Chair, 936-294-1647

Coordinator for the Master of Science in Victim Services Management Program: Philip Mulvey (pwm010@shsu.edu), 936-294-4174

- Master of Science in Victim Services Management (<https://catalog.shsu.edu/archives/2025-2026/graduate-and-professional/college-departments/criminal-justice/criminal-justice-criminology/victims-services-management-ms/>)

Scholarships

Scholarships and financial assistance are available. Scholarships are awarded on a competitive basis based upon academic performance and letters of recommendation, among other factors.

Financial awards are available, including out-of-state tuition waivers. University policy requires all students to pay in-state tuition.

Information on specific scholarships available in the College of Criminal Justice are available through Cutty Gilbert (cutty@shsu.edu) at (936) 294-3755. Potential graduate students should contact Doris Pratt (pratt@shsu.edu) at (936) 294-3637. Students may also apply for scholarships through the Graduate School. Certain conditions apply. For specific information regarding the Graduate School General Scholarship, contact Graduate Studies at: 936.294.2408 or gradstudies@shsu.edu.

Director/Chair: **Shelly Lynn Clevenger**

Mary Magdalene Breaux, PHD (mmp019@shsu.edu), *Professor of Practice in Victim Studies, Department of Victim Studies*, PHD, Prairie View A&M University; MA, Webster University; BS, Sam Houston State University

Shelly Lynn Clevenger, PHD (sxc167@shsu.edu), *Professor and Chair of Victim Studies, Department of Victim Studies*, PHD, Indiana University of Pennsylv; MA, Indiana University of Pennsylv; BA, Indiana University of Pennsylv

Jessica Caitlin Fleming, PHD (jcc063@shsu.edu), *Assistant Professor of Victim Studies, Department of Victim Studies*, PHD, Sam Houston State University; PHD, Purdue University; MA, Sam Houston State University; BS, Sam Houston State University

Philip W Mulvey, PHD (pwm010@shsu.edu), *Associate Professor of Victim Studies, Department of Victim Studies*, PHD, Arizona State University; MA, Boston College; BS, Univ of Illinois-Urbana

Kathleen Rene Ratajczak, PHD (kxr084@shsu.edu), *Assistant Professor of Victim Studies, Department of Victim Studies*, PHD, Univ of Kentucky; MA, Univ of Cincinnati; BA, John Carroll University

VCST 5364. Seminar in Victimology. 3 Hours.

Students critically examine the study of criminal victimization. Students analyze theories of crime victimization, findings from contemporary research, typologies, best practices, and policy implications. Course Equivalents: CRIJ 5364 .

VCST 5365. Seminar in Crime Victim Services and Management. 3 Hours.

Students examine topics in non-profit agency management with a particular focus on residential shelters. This course satisfies a core requirement of the Master of Science in Victim Services Management program. By the end of this course, students examine and critically evaluate evidence-based practices and laws that govern shelter service delivery. Course Equivalents: CRIJ 5365 .

VCST 5366. Advocacy and Case Management. 3 Hours.

Students engage with an advanced understanding of advocacy work. Bridging research, policy, and practice, students explore the history of the victim rights movement and principles of empowerment-based advocacy. Issues surrounding confidentiality, professionalism, and ethics in service provision are also explored. Course Equivalents: CRIJ 5366

Prerequisite: none.

VCST 5368. Human Sex Trafficking. 3 Hours.

Students explore the scope and magnitude of global and domestic human sex trafficking as well as synthesize the research on antecedents to entry into the sex trade and mental and physical health outcomes from trafficking victimization. Traffickers and solicitors are examined in light of criminological and victimology theory and research. Students evaluate and assess public policy, criminal justice responses, and social service delivery for victims of trafficking in terms of effectiveness. Course Equivalents: CRIJ 5368

Prerequisite: none.

VCST 5370. Elder Abuse and Victimization. 3 Hours.

Students engage in a broad-based study of social, physical, and psychological aspects of elder abuse and victimization. Topics include the dynamics of aging, types of elder abuse, the incidence and prevalence of these crimes, and prevailing theoretical perspectives. Particular attention is paid to elder abuse and the law, along with social service, law enforcement, and medical responses to these offenses. In addition, students explore long-range trends in aging in the U.S. and national, state, and local initiatives to protect the population's eldest members. Course Equivalents: CRIJ 5370

Prerequisite: none.

VCST 5371. Interpersonal Violence. 3 Hours.

Students explore non-lethal and lethal violence occurring over the life course between or among persons who are typically related by blood, legal union, or cohabitation. This includes intimate partners, children, parents and other family members, as well as close friends. Emphasis is placed on the evaluation of community-based resources for preventing or responding to interpersonal violence, along with history of public policy. In addition, students evaluate the challenges of coordinating efforts among legal, medical, and social service providers. Course Equivalents: CRIJ 5371

Prerequisite: none.

VCST 5372. Cybervictimization. 3 Hours.

Students evaluate how cybertechnologies contribute to victimization. Topics will include how to incorporate technology related factors into victimization intervention, prevention, and policy.

VCST 5374. Murder Victimization. 3 Hours.

Students explore issues related to murder victimization. Topics will include factors related to murder victimization risk, grief and coping of the victims' family, larger societal issues, as well as system responses.

VCST 5376. Mental Illness & Victimization. 3 Hours.

Students investigate the victimization of individuals with mental illness in the United States. Particular attention is paid to how systems of social control have traditionally (re)victimized individuals with mental illness. Students explore historical perspectives, current theoretical considerations, available services, and promising programs to develop a deeper knowledge concerning people with mental illness as victims and their victimization experiences.

VCST 5383. Family Violence. 3 Hours.

Students evaluate research policy and practice on the study on family violence. Students examine victim-offender relationship dynamics, theoretical explanations for battering, danger assessment, barriers to help-seeking, and legal considerations. Course Equivalents: CRIJ 5383

Prerequisite: None.

VCST 5384. Child Abuse and Neglect. 3 Hours.

Students evaluate research, policy, and practice in addressing the history and development of the child saving movement in the United States. Students examine practical considerations for advocates, including mandatory reporting, confidentiality, and abuse and neglect indicators. Course Equivalents: CRIJ 5384

Prerequisite: None.

VCST 5385. Non-Profit Grant Writing. 3 Hours.

Students are familiarized with the process of non-profit grant writing. Students write grants for the mock shelter programs they developed in VCST 5365 Crime Victims Services and Management Seminar. They learn how to develop a proposal and the various types of grants. Logic models and performance measures are explored. Course Equivalents: CRIJ 5385 .

VCST 6330. Neurobiology of Trauma. 3 Hours.

Students evaluate the role of the brain, brain systems, and hormone/chemical responses in explaining reactions to experiencing and witnessing a variety of traumatic events. Information is contrasted to traditional, responses from criminal justice practitioners (e.g., law enforcement, courtroom actors), medical staff, and social service personnel when presented with victims of trauma. Evidence-based practices for effective forensic interview techniques and victim advocacy are synthesized in light of recent advances in neuroscience of trauma. Course Equivalents: CRIJ 6330

Prerequisite: none.

VCST 6338. Coordinating Victim Services. 3 Hours.

Students examine professional stakeholders in victim service delivery to ensure efficient, professional, and cooperative victim-centered responses to trauma and criminal victimization. Students evaluate the preventative and reactive mechanisms available to a range of government and non-government providers and synthesizes the management of these victim service provisions. Additionally, students explore the challenges of coordinating efforts between different professional organizations and ways to critically and effectively address problems. Course Equivalents: CRIJ 6338

Prerequisite: none.

VCST 6393. Independent Study in Victim Studies. 3 Hours.

Students examine a topic related to victim studies. Under the direct supervision of a faculty member, the faculty and student formulate a course of study which could include reviewing relevant literature, engaging in research, exploring professional practice, or conducting other forms of inquiry appropriate to the course of study. The course may be repeated for credit.

Prerequisite: Graduate Standing and Department Approval.

VCST 6394. Special Topics in Victim Studies. 3 Hours.

Students examine special topics in the field of victimology and victim services. This course is designed to give Victim Services Management graduate students academic flexibility. Students may repeat this course for credit when topics differ.