# Debra Dreisbach, Lecturer, CRIMJ, Berks campus Reflection TLI Grant – CRIMJ 210/Fall 2018 & Spring 2019

The TLI grant was an incentive to create an interactive learning experience that would challenge and deepen thinking and learning in CRIMJ 210 in an entirely new and different way. The TLI grant was awarded to me on January 31, 2018, to create a learning environment, utilizing a 360-degree video camera, with which students would creatively create and think about use-of-force issues, in my CRIMJ 210, American Policing classes. The project ran for two consecutive semesters, Fall 2018 & Spring 2019.

## Proposal

A few of the initial goals of the project, as described in my proposal, were:

* *Students apply their learning in an immersive experience that is applicable in a real-world context.*
* *Students will be able to take part in the scenario as opposed to a lecture format in a traditional classroom.*
* *360-video lets students experience the virtual environment and understand concepts better.*
* *They will develop leadership skills by engaging in this creative experience, by planning and coordinating the project, leading discussions and working within groups.*

Students in my CRIMJ 210 classes tend to be Criminal Justice majors who previously completed CRIMJ 100, Introduction to Criminal Justice. As a result of completing CRIMJ 100, students should come to CRIMJ 210 with a working knowledge of how the criminal justice system works, which should include background on policing agencies and the legal authority conferred on all police officers. All too often, students in CRIMJ 210, are unable to fully understand when a police officer can legally act, the degree to which and under what conditions he can use force and the consequences of the use-of-force. Learning use-of-force concepts from a textbook or lecture is much akin to learning to knit by listening to an instructor, without using needles or yarn.

Students tend to rely on information about police and their use-of-force polices through viewing YouTube videos or Snapchat/Instagram videos and stories. All too often, police videos, released on the aforementioned platforms, are not reliable and do not accurately reflect the scenario or the content. When I submitted my TLT proposal, I desired to create, as stated above, an immersive experience, whereby students could, within teams, collaboratively research their intended topic and create legally appropriate scenarios around their topic. Utilizing the new 360-deree video camera allowed students to better understand the fluid concept of use-of-force, by being “in the middle of the action.” Students further developed their critical thinking skills as they drafted the scenarios, acted them out, and then created assessment questions for future students.

## Creating the workspace – Canvas pages, assignments & modules

The goals of my project, as well as the general outline of assignments, were pretty clear in my mind at the outset of the project. I had a clear vision of what I wanted to accomplish and where I wanted to go. Creating specific content, however, in the form of pages and modules, proved somewhat more challenging. With the assistance of my project manager, Mary Ann Mengel, CLT, Berks College, I was able to move through the process with relative ease and confidence. In my classes at Berks, I utilize Canvas on a daily basis and while I was proficient in the use of Canvas and creating content, there were areas, such as peer reviews, that I was not familiar with. Mary Ann was able to effectively guide me as we jointly worked on this project.

There are a total of 42 pages or assignments linked to the 360-degree video project in my CRIMJ 210 Canvas classroom (additional links embedded within these pages/assignments). Creating content for this many pages/assignments was daunting, to say the least. I think the layout of the modules is scaffolded effectively, user-friendly, and if students want to find a topic or item, it is easy for them to navigate within the modules. The 360-degree project within Canvas is set up chronologically and each of the pages/assignments is clearly titled so that students can effectively ascertain content contained therein.

## Structure – pages, assignments, and modules

Feedback from students in both semesters tended to be similar regarding the layout of the project on Canvas. Students felt some of the pages were difficult to understand, for example, the peer review pages. In the future, I will attempt to make these pages a little easier to understand and separate the DRV from the peer review page.

Students tended not to read through the project modules, as was clear during weekly class conversations, where students were unfamiliar with project details and requirements. During the first class meeting, as well as throughout the semester, I reviewed and discussed the project in detail. Unfortunately, I feel as if students did not spend the necessary time reviewing the module pages, researching, and preparing project assignments. A potential fix for students not reviewing pages/assignments would be to streamline the content into fewer pages so that students are motivated to read through the project modules.

## Research

At the conclusion of the first semester, I instituted a research assignment, which was missing from the initial semester. Scenarios and end-of-project assessment questions created in the first semester lacked knowledge of the legal background on use-of-force. The research assignment was created within the context of a team discussion forum, so that each team member could benefit from the collective research. Unfortunately, the research assignment did not yield significant benefits for the teams generally. The research was not conducted using reliable sources and, in a few instances, no research was conducted at all. Students, at least in CRIMJ, are used to drafting research papers and when they viewed the research assignment that was to be posted in a discussion forum, the assignment wasn’t taken seriously.

## Introduction to 360

In some ways, I believe we provided too much content/pages for students. In the “Introduction to 360-degree video” page, I provided examples of 360-degree video. I do not believe this page was an effective vehicle for students to learn about this new technology. Students did not access the page or watch the videos I provided. A better means for students to engage and learn about 360-video would be for students to find their own examples of 360-degree video and discuss why they felt the video accurately reflected the benefits of 360 or why the video was a poor representation. In the future, I will implement an additional assignment where students must find, view, and discuss examples of 360-degree video on their own time.

## Virtual Meetings

Another area of concern were the two virtual meetings; the first focusing on the storyboard and the second on the DRV. Students routinely came to the meetings unprepared without notes or opinions and not willing to interact with either myself or other students. Students could not enable either their audio or video and had not prepared their computers prior to the date of the meeting. The meetings ended up being a one-way conversation, similar to a traditional lecture in the classroom.

In the future, I will schedule the meetings during class time so that students feel motivated to interact and engage.

## Due Dates

Students tended to be lackadaisical about the project until approximately the due date of the DRV. Once students’ film, I believe the project became more concrete and I witnessed more enthusiasm about the project. I identified the lack of enthusiasm after the initial semester and attempted to address the problem by creating assignment due dates that were closer to the beginning of the semester (initial) and with less lag time in-between, in order to motivate students to interact and meet with each other. In the Fall 2018 semester, there was too much time between the beginning of the semester and the first deliverable. In the first semester, students waited until the weekend before the storyboard due date to draft the storyboard.

## Impact

Overall, I do believe the project to be a success and was a learning experience for both the students and myself. After looking at the initial goals I set for the project, I believe the project fulfilled each of the aforementioned goals. After participation in the project, the students grasped the use-of-force policies more clearly and were able to analyze and apply the concepts learned.

One of the most visible benefits of the project were the numerous opportunities for leadership and team building. An end-of-semester anonymous survey drafted by Mary Ann Mengel asked for student feedback. Only a few students completed the survey, however, those students that provided feedback were overwhelmingly positive about the opportunity to work within a team and the myriad occasions for growth within that team format. Generally, the teams worked as a cohesive unit and were able to settle disagreements or issues by returning to the dictates of the team contract.

The project could not have moved forward successfully without the assistance of the TLI grant and the competent assistance of CLT, Berks, and in particular, my project manager Mary Ann Mengel. Mary Ann is an expert in all things Canvas and early on bought into my vision for the project. Her guidance and expertise contributed to the overall success of the project and without it the project would not be as effective.

Thank you for the opportunity to turn my vision into reality and I look forward to future collaborations.