

School Name Florida International University, Miami, FL  
 Course Name Criminal Justice and Public Policy  
 Credit Format Face-to-face

**Key Results** Students who scored 80–100 percent on MyWritingLab post-tests had an average final essay grade of 84 percent versus 75 percent for students who scored less than 80 percent on MyWritingLab post-tests.

**Submitted by**  
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**Course materials**  
*Last Call*, Okrent; *Making Sense of Criminal Justice*, Mays and Ruddell; MyWritingLab

### Setting

This capstone course introduces senior Criminal Justice students to a range of important crime control policies, integrating material covered throughout the Criminal Justice curriculum. It requires students to thoughtfully and critically assess the consequences of specific criminal justice policies on the system and society. In addition to understanding crime control methods, literature, strategies, analysis, research, and practice, students are also expected to be able to:

- Create logical, evidence-based final essays assessing the effectiveness of policing and prosecution strategies.
- Produce written work that is grammatically correct, well organized, and properly formatted.

### Challenges and Goals

In the past, students had not performed very well on their essays. Because these are senior students and writing is a major component of the course, I decided to assign MyWritingLab to strengthen their critical thinking and writing skills.

### Implementation

I give students three weeks to work on the key MyWritingLab topics they will need to master to satisfactorily complete their required final essay. I assign this work at the very beginning of the semester so that students receive a solid review before they even begin the writing assignment for the course.

Beyond reviewing basic MyWritingLab topics like punctuation, mechanics, and usage, which they have already covered earlier during their college work, they also work on advanced topics, including “Reading Critically and Rhetorically,” “Writing Arguments,” and “Conducting Research and Documenting Sources.” Students can take the Skills Checks to test out of some topics, and I give them three chances to pass the MyWritingLab post-tests for each assigned module.

Students send rough drafts of their essays to Pearson Tutor Services via MyWritingLab, where they receive personalized feedback from experienced writing instructors on content development, organization, and using sources properly. This gives them invaluable advice on their writing while it allows me more time to concentrate on the Criminal Justice concepts I want to present fully. Then, they submit both their reflection sheets and this rough draft feedback to me through Blackboard, our university’s LMS, so I can monitor how they might revise their work and how they are progressing toward final drafts.

### Assessments

31 percent	Exams (2)
24 percent	Final essay
21 percent	Debate presentation
8 percent	Discussions
6 percent	MyWritingLab topics
5 percent	Course policies quiz
5 percent	Reflection sheet with rough draft feedback (draft submitted via Pearson Tutor Services)

*“It is important to me and to my department that students meet both the content and skills objectives for this senior capstone course, and I am pleased to say that MyWritingLab is helping us meet important student learning outcomes related to writing.”*

### Results and Data

- Forty out of 44 students received a passing grade on the final essay, a pass rate of 91 percent.
- Given the limitations of this study, there appears to be a relationship between students’ performance on important MyWritingLab topics and their ability to create better organized essays.
- Students who scored 80–100 percent on MyWritingLab post-tests had an average essay grade of 84 percent versus 75 percent for students who scored less than 80 percent on MyWritingLab post-tests (Figure 1).

### Conclusion

I believe that requiring MyWritingLab helps students improve their general writing skills and develop more coherent and professional final essays. For example, I now see students turning in more polished early drafts of their papers. Further, MyWritingLab modules on key topics like “Context and Purpose” and “Drawing Conclusions” help them master more sophisticated skills to make their final essay arguments compelling. It is important to me and to my department that students meet both the content and skills objectives for this senior capstone course, and I am pleased to say that MyWritingLab is helping us meet important student learning outcomes related to writing.

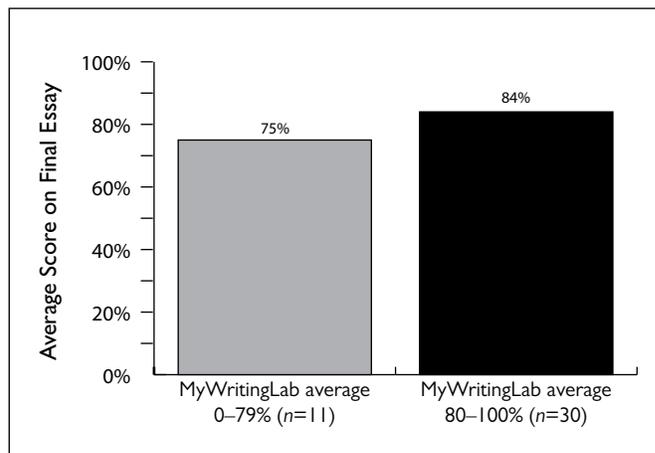


Figure 1. Average Score on Final Essay as Compared to MyWritingLab Performance

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Implementation and results case studies share actual implementation practices and evaluate possible relationships between program implementation and student performance. The findings are not meant to imply causality or generalizability within or beyond these instances. Rather, they can begin to provide informed considerations for implementation and adaptation decisions in other user contexts. For this case study, mixed-methods designs were applied, and the data collected included qualitative data from interviews, quantitative program usage analytics, and performance data. Open-ended interviews were used to guide data collection.