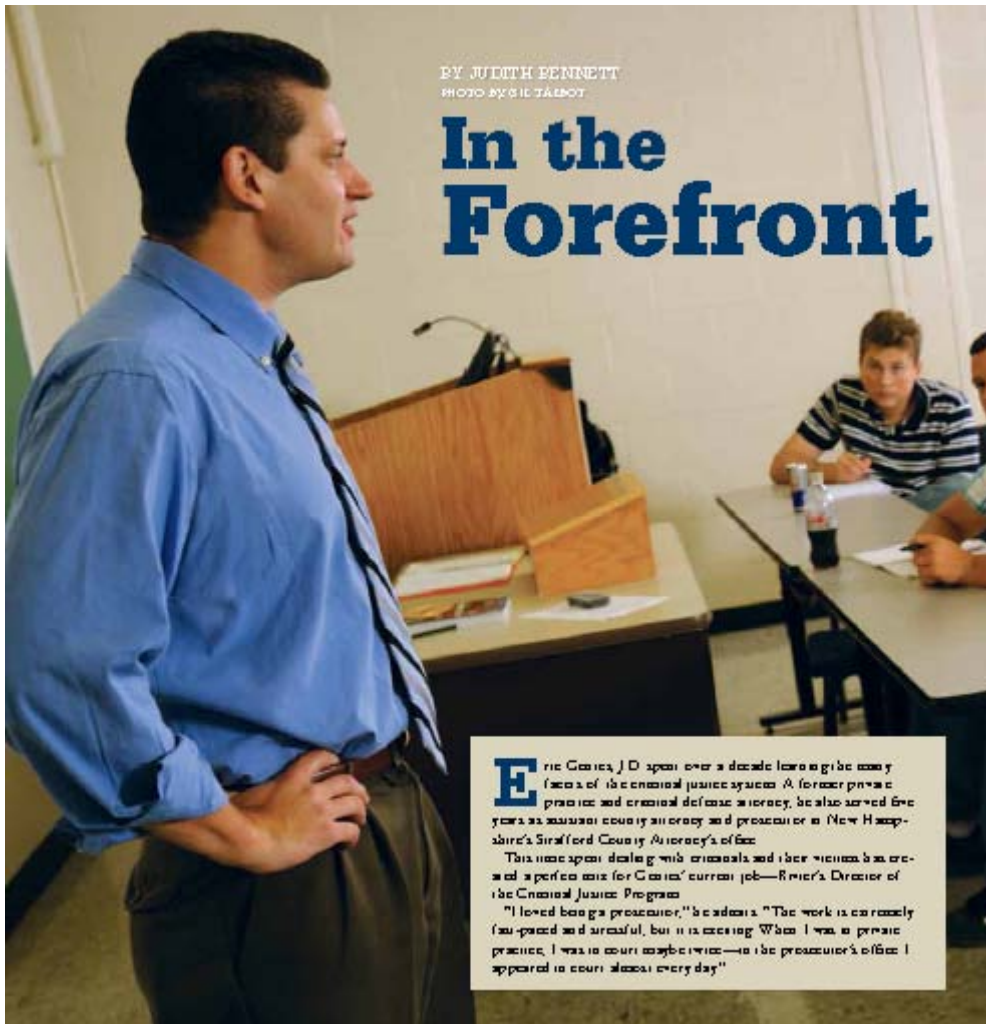


FACULTY PROFILE: ERIC GENTES, J.D.,
Assistant Professor and Director of the Criminal Justice Program
(From *Rivier Today*, Summer 2012)

Judith Bennett



Eric Gentes, J.D. spent over a decade learning the many facets of the criminal justice system. A former private practice and criminal defense attorney, he also served five years as assistant county attorney and prosecutor in New Hampshire's Strafford County Attorney's office.

This time spent dealing with criminals and their victims has created a perfect mix for Gentes' current job—Rivier's Director of the Criminal Justice Program.

"I loved being a prosecutor," he admits. "The work is extremely fast-paced and stressful, but it is exciting. When I was in private practice, I was in court maybe twice—in the prosecutor's office I appeared in court almost every day."

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But the high stress can take a toll. “I would work an eight hour day and then take a lot of work home,” he says. “In many ways it’s a younger man’s game and by the time my wife and I had our second child we were ready for a change.”

Gentes had always wanted to teach, and following his graduation from UMass-Amherst, he had picked up his backpack and traveled to Eastern Europe where he landed jobs teaching English both in a Primary School in Prague, Czech Republic and at Poznan Technical College in Poznan, Poland.

“I had an interest in European History from college and in 1993 I was lucky to end up in Prague which was then known as the “Paris of the 90’s,” he recalls. “There was a large expatriate community there and I met a lot of people from all over the world.”

“The following year, while I was at Poznan, I also hosted a series of discussions open to faculty and students on American life,” he adds, “including American regionalism and the American education system.”

Gentes never quite let go of the teaching bug, even as he came home to enter Boston College Law School.

“I still wanted to be a teacher,” he says. “I used to think about teaching law or criminal justice, so when the opportunity at Rivier presented itself, I was ready.” Gentes took over the Criminal Justice Program as Director and Assistant Professor in 2009 and had overseen many changes in the curriculum.

As Assistant Professor, Gentes teaches courses in criminal law, criminal procedure, legal research and writing about the criminal justice system.

As Director, he recruits and supervises the adjunct faculty, including members of the Nashua Police Department and conducts outreach to courts, other police departments and criminal justice agencies. He also oversees the three criminal justice internship programs.

“I am pleased that we can offer substantive internships to all of our students,” he says. “These can include work in legal settings like police departments, prosecutor or public defender offices or a general law office. The summer internship program allows students to intern anywhere in the country or even the world.”

With new technology, increased cultural diversity and a new focus on victim services or victimology, criminal justice is an evolving field. Gentes has been in the forefront, addressing these issues both with the community and his students.

“Victimology can include everything from asking the following questions: How are victims and their families impacted by crime? How well does the criminal justice system meet the needs of victims? What risk factors are associated with the increased likelihood of becoming a victim of crime?

“This could include things such as alcohol consumption,” he adds. “We have hired new faculty members who will be starting this fall. They will partner with the sociology department in addressing these issues.”

Another of Gentes’ interests includes the philosophy of community policing. This concept makes use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to address immediate issues that can give rise to public safety such as crime, social disorder and fear of crime. It is particularly important in diverse communities.

“I was fortunate to bring together a community policing panel discussion in 2011 with several area police officials,” he says. “Among the topics discussed was, how to recruit a police force that looks like

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the community itself and whether community policing is compatible with the enforcement of federal immigration laws by local police departments.”

“Community policing recognizes that the best way to address crime is to prevent it from happening in the first place. The only way to do this,” he adds, “and to be able to respond effectively, is for the police to partner with members of the community. The more partnerships the police can establish, and the stronger these partnerships are, the better for everyone.”

Gentes explains that community policing involves knowing the community including the “bad guys” and the leaders, and being able to trust and to communicate with these leaders. This is particularly challenging when the larger community is made up of multiple smaller communities each with its own culture, history, traditions and ways of looking at things.

“It was a great discussion” he says, “and I hope it will turn into an annual event where we invite leading practitioners and academics to discuss current issues in criminal justice.”■

At a glance:

Academic Background

- J.D. Boston College Law School
- B.A. University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Favorite travel destination

- Europe and California

Favorite Movie

- *Jaws*

Favorite Book:

- *Crime and Punishment*