

Course Description

This course examines criminal law and criminal procedure from a social science perspective. You will learn from case materials and legal sources, as well as criminological and popular accounts of how the law operates in the real world. We will study how criminal law is constructed, used by legal actors, and interpreted by courts, with an emphasis on how criminal procedure has expanded over the past several decades.

Objectives & Outcomes

1. You will master a wide breadth of knowledge about criminal law and criminal procedure in the United States, with attention toward the real-world implementation and impacts of these laws.
2. You will leave the course with specific knowledge of the history and socio-political context of criminal law in the U.S. and understand how this history impacts current events.
3. The course will stimulate your thinking about questions at the intersection of law, criminology, public policy, sociology, and political science. You will draw connections between disciplinary approaches to criminal law, particularly by comparing the “law on the books” and the “law in action.”
4. The seminar will encourage your professional development by modeling how social scientists can engage with law and policy in both academic and applied settings.

Canvas is essential to check several times a week. You will access all the course materials under the Modules section of our course webpage. I will also make announcements, open discussions, and accept written work via the platform.

Office Hours are held in my office (CLJ 557) on Tuesdays from 3-5PM. This is an informal, drop-in space for us to talk. I am also available by appointment for in-person or Zoom sessions. Please come!

Course Requirements		Grading	
Attendance	14 points	A	93-100%
Participation	36 points	B+	88-92%
Midterm	75 points	B	82-87%
Paper	75 points	C+	78-81%
		C	72-77%
Total Points	200 points	D	62-71%

Texts: All readings are open source and will be posted to Canvas. You do not need to purchase any books for this class.

COURSE ELEMENTS

Participation & Attendance

You will receive one point toward your final grade for attending each weekly course meeting. Additionally, you will be assigned two class periods where you will be expected to engage in discussion with me and your classmates about the class material. On your designated days, I will ask you to brief our materials, respond to discussion questions, and raise your own questions. Each of these participation days is worth 18 points, so it is critical to come well prepared.

Midterm Exam

Midway through the course there will be a 48-hour take home exam. The exam is open note, but not open internet – you must not Google answers or use materials outside what was assigned in class (including both required and optional readings). We will discuss format and study strategies in class.

Final Paper

You have two options for your final paper, which is worth 75 points and is due Sunday, December 18 by 11:59 PM.

Option 1:

Conduct three hours of fieldwork over two sessions (in person) at a local criminal court. Choose one Constitutional right to focus your observations and analysis. Be sure to seek out court proceedings that correspond with your area of inquiry (e.g. jury selection or sentencing). Prepare a 8-10 page paper that addresses the following:

- 1) The Constitutional Right you are investigating, with historical and legal background
- 2) The court where you conducted your fieldwork: location, description of physical space/people/situations you encountered
- 3) Specific examples of how this Constitutional right was addressed in the court proceedings.

Option 2:

Select a major case we have studied in the course. In an 8-10 page, double-spaced paper, analyze the case in its historical context and through the lens of social science research. You must cite at least 15 external sources, including at least 5 peer reviewed, empirical studies. Address the following:

- 1) Basic facts of the case and lower court decision-making
- 2) The historical context when the case was decided, with attention toward the parties and their specific interests
- 3) Social, economic, race, gender, crime, or other factors that may have influenced the case or the court's reasoning. Use social science research to explain why these factors are important to consider
- 4) The consequences of the court decision and whether or not you agree with their reasoning.

Course Topics

Note: all required readings are posted to Canvas under "Modules." As the semester progresses, I will assign readings relevant to student interests.

Week 1	The American Legal System
Week 2	Prosecution, Defense & Judges
Week 3	Introduction to Criminal Procedure
Week 4	4 th Amendment: policing, searches, and warrants
Week 5	4 th Amendment: probable cause and reasonable suspicion
Week 6	5 th Amendment: due process, double jeopardy, self-incrimination
Week 7	6 th Amendment: Trial rights
Week 8	Remedies: suppression, appeals, lawsuits, and qualified immunity
Week 9	Criminal punishment
Week 10	Midterm exam
Week 11	Critical Race Theory & Criminal law
Week 12	Immigration; Sex crimes
Week 13	Algorithms, Surveillance & Privacy
Week 14	Experts & the Role of the Social Scientist
Final paper due Sunday, December 18 by 11:59 PM to Canvas	