



CJ 431-01E CRN 8728 LAW AND COURTS

Course Syllabus: Fall 2023

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: James A. Purdon, Ph.D.

Office Location: McDowell Administration Building, Office 102C

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10:00am-12:00pm.

Office Phone: (903) 886.5331

University Email Address: James.Purdon@tamuc.edu

Communication Response Time: Emails are answered within 24 hours Monday-Friday during business hours (9am-5pm).

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Required Text

- Neubauer, D. W., & Fradella, H. F. (2019). *America's courts and the criminal justice system* (13th ed.). Belmont, CA: Cengage. ISB: 978-1337557894

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an advanced approach which focuses on a combined examination of the criminal justice system highlighting the principles and nature of criminal law; while examining the operation of the American Court system at the federal, state, and local judicial levels. This course examines the court system working group(s) and the development of criminal law as it impacts society. In addition, this course is designed to emphasize case processing such as pretrial, adjudication, and sentencing, as well as offer an advanced understanding to the interworking of the court process.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Interpret the major constitutional rights guaranteed to the accused in a criminal prosecution and how those rights affect criminal court proceedings;
2. Explain the basic structure and administration of the court systems, including federal, state, and juvenile courts;
3. Describe the role and function of key courtroom actors involved in the criminal court system;
4. Identify the pre-trial, trial, and post-trial processes;
5. Discuss the major criminal sentencing structures and various sentencing options available to judges under each;
6. Evaluate sentencing disparities resulting from the U.S. criminal court system.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

- **Computer System:** Windows or Macintosh desktop or laptop computer purchased within the last 5 years. Chromebooks and mobile devices may not provide full online access.
- **Operating System:** Windows-based computers must be running Windows 10 or newer. Macintosh computers must be running OS 10.13 (High Sierra) or higher.
- **Required Software:** Microsoft Office 365; Adobe Acrobat Reader DC
- **Web Browser:** Use a recently updated internet browser.
- **Learning Management System (LMS):** See below for requirements.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

This class will use a variety of pedagogical practices to support student-centered learning. You can expect my classes to include lectures supported by engaging PowerPoint presentations, class discussions on a variety of topics, hypotheticals to challenge your understanding of concepts, activities to promote application and comprehension, and, with a little luck, guest speakers/lecturers to provide a more unique touch.

My role as an educator is get you, the students, to learn how to think critically based on facts. By this I mean form informed opinions based on empirical evidence, logic, and reason. I view my position in this class to “help student think, but not tell students what to think.”

I very much so employ an “active teaching model” and encourage students to be active participants in their learning. Students enrolled in my courses are required to take a substantial amount of responsibility for learning and understanding the course material. I serve as the guide; however, I do not “spoon feed” information to be regurgitated back to me on assignments and assessments.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

In order to succeed in this course students must: (1) complete the assigned reading; (2) review all module materials; (3) think critically about issues presented in class; (4) be involved and engaged in the course; (5) be open to constructive feedback.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES OR TIPS FOR SUCCESS IN THE COURSE

1. **Review** the **Syllabus** and the **Course Schedule** to keep up to date on requirements for the course.
2. **Read announcements and check email!** I will send updates about the courses through D2L, so check regularly.
3. Create a **personal organization system** to keep track of specified due dates.
4. **Communicate regularly** with your instructor and peers.
5. **Create a study and/or assignment schedule** to stay on track.
6. Set aside **regular times** in which you can do your classwork with minimal interruptions or distractions. Avoid multitasking while studying.
7. Learn about and use the student resources available to you! You can get free assistance from the [A&M-Library](#), [IT Support](#), [the Writing Center](#), and more.

ASSESSMENTS

Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation in class activities is an essential part of the learning process; thus, students are expected to attend class regularly. You are expected to have completed all required readings and to be prepared to contribute to class discussions. While some absences are unavoidable, you are responsible for making up missed absences and notifying the professor.

Reflection on Double Jeopardy Paper

Students will be required to write a reflection on the case of Timothy Hennis. An excerpt is found on page 44 in the Courts, Controversy, and Administration of Justice feature of the text. For this assignment, students need to explain the prohibition of double jeopardy (Fifth Amendment), explain how Hennis was convicted in Federal court, and reflect on whether this is an appropriate method to carry out justice (i.e., does this follow the spirit of the law or does this jeopardize defendant rights). This should be approximately 2 pages, Times New Roman, 12pt font, normal (1") margins, and double spaced.

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Courts and Courtroom Actors Presentation

Students will present on a criminal case of their choice and highlight the court and courtroom actors involved. This presentation should cover relevant items such as background facts of the case, the case outcome, the jurisdiction of the court, any relevant procedural history, and key courtroom actors' roles throughout the process. You may use any relevant aids to facilitate your presentation such as visual aids (PowerPoint or Prezi), segments or clips of videos, and pictures. You may also form small groups (no more than 3), but everyone must contribute equally in both the creation and presentation of the project. Presentations should not run longer than 7 minutes with 3 minutes for questions.

Wrongful Convictions Writing Assignment

On Netflix, there is a documentary series called The Innocence Files. There are nine episodes chronicling ways that the criminal justice system has failed and wrongfully convicted and incarcerated individuals. Wrongful convictions, as we touched on briefly in class, are the ultimate system failure. All of the checks in place to keep innocent people from being harmed by the system have broken down. Wrongful convictions are important to study and learn from, as they are a product of the criminal justice system as it is today. Students will pick an episode and write a 2 page paper critically analyzing the systematic failures observed.

Sentencing Assignment

Each student will be given the role of acting judge on a presiding hypothetical case (to be distributed on D2L). The students will be given the task of choosing an appropriate sentence based on factors of the case and sentencing guidelines (also distributed on D2L). Students must explain the rationale for the sentence (e.g., sentencing philosophy and purpose/goal of the sentence), and assess the potential strain on the criminal justice system. This paper should be 2 – 3 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, with 1" margins.

Exams

There will be three exams over the course of the semester that coincides with the three parts of this course. These exams include a variety of objective questions, such as true/false and multiple choice, as well as written components, such as short-answer and/or full-length essay questions. Exams will be administered in-person on an assigned day according to the course schedule. Students will only be allowed to use a writing instrument and will have the full class time to complete the exam.

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale (see Table 1):

Table 1: Grade Cut-Offs		
Grade	Points	Percentage
A	900-1000	90.00% – 100%
B	800-899	80.00% – 89.99%
C	700-799	70.00% – 79.99%
D	600-699	60.00% – 69.99%
F	Below 600	Below 60.00%

Total points corresponding to the final letter grades (see Table 2):

Table 2: Assessments and Their Values		
Assignment	Points	Percentage
Attendance and Participation	100	10%
Reflection Paper	100	10%
Court Presentation	100	10%
Wrongful Convictions Assignment	100	10%
Sentencing Writing Assignment	150	15%
Exam 1	150	15%
Exam 2	150	15%
Exam 3	150	15%

Grades can be accessed on D2L.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

Communication will be held either in-person, email, or through D2L.

What to call me – Please refer to me as Professor or Dr. Purdon.

Look for the answer first. When questions arise during the course of this class, please remember to check these two sources for an answer *before* you contact me:

- Course Syllabus
- Announcements in D2L

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Attendance and Participation

Class attendance is a vital part of class participation, and ensuring your success in this course. Come prepared to participate and attend regularly.

Excused absences for classes will be given without penalty to the grade in the case of any of the following reasons: (1) Participation in a required/authorized University activity; (2) Verified illness; (3) Death in a student's immediate family; (4) Obligation of a student at a legal proceedings in fulfilling responsibility as a citizen; and (5) Others determined by individual faculty to be excused (e.g., elective University activities, etc.).

Citation Style

Students are required to use the citation style and format of the American Psychological Association (APA). Review the *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.) or similar APA Citation Style online resource. It is acceptable to cite legal materials (cases, statutes, regulations, etc.) in accordance with the style specified in *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (21st ed.) in all papers.

Extra credit

Please do not ask for extra credit. Although an extra credit assignment may be offered to the whole class for attending a talk or participating in a learning experience beyond those anticipated in this syllabus, no individualized extra credit work will be permitted. Why? Extra credit is unfair to the students who do their work diligently all semester long.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

UNIVERSITY SPECIFIC PROCEDURES

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

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Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES-- ADA STATEMENT

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

CAMPUS CONCEALED CARRY STATEMENT

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

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A&M-COMMERCE SUPPORTS STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

AI Use IN COURSES

Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty
13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty

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COURSE SCHEDULE

ACTIVITIES/ASSIGNMENTS	PERCENTAGE	DUE DATE
WEEK 1: Introduction to law and the judicial function, sources of law, types of law		
Readings: Syllabus and Introduction	--	29-Aug
Readings: Chapter 1	--	31-Aug
WEEK 2: Court Organization (Federal)		
Readings: Chapter 2	--	5-Sep
Readings: Chapter 2	--	7-Sep
WEEK 3: Court Organization (State and Special Courts)		
Readings: Chapter 3	--	12-Sep
Readings: Chapter 3	--	14-Sep
Week 4: Court Organization (Juvenile)		
Readings: Chapter 4	--	19-Sep
Readings: Chapter 4		21-Sep
Assignment 1: Reflection Paper Due!	10%	21-Sep
WEEK 5: Court House Justice		
Exam 1	15%	26-Sep
Readings: Chapter 5	--	28-Sep
WEEK 6: Prosecutors		
Readings: Chapter 6	--	3-Oct
Readings: Chapter 6	--	5-Oct
WEEK 7: Defense Attorneys		
Readings: Chapter 7	--	10-Oct
Readings: Chapter 7 & Gideon v. Wainwright, U.S. 335 (1963). Online at: http://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/372/335	--	12-Oct
WEEK 8: Judges		
Readings: Chapter 8	--	17-Oct
Readings: Chapter 8	--	19-Oct
WEEK 9: Defendants, Victims, and Witnesses		
Readings: Chapter 9	--	24-Oct
Readings: Chapter 9	--	26-Oct
Assignment 2: Court and Courtroom Actor Presentation Due!	10%	26-Oct

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WEEK 10: Pretrial Procedures		
Exam 2	--	31-Oct
Readings: Chapter 10	15%	2-Nov
WEEK 11: Law of Evidence		
Readings: Chapter 11	--	7-Nov
Readings: Chapter 11	--	9-Nov
WEEK 12: Plea Bargaining		
Readings: Chapter 12	--	14-Nov
American Society of Criminology Conference – Class Cancelled	--	16-Nov
Assignment 3: Wrongful Convictions Assignment Due!	10%	16-Nov
WEEK 13: Criminal Trials and Juries		
Readings: Chapter 13	--	21-Nov
Holiday - Class Cancelled	--	23-Nov
WEEK 14: Sentencing		
Readings: Chapter 14	--	28-Nov
Readings: Chapter 14	--	30-Nov
WEEK 15: The Appellate Process		
Readings: Chapter 15	--	5-Dec
Readings: Chapter 15	--	7-Dec
Assignment 4: Sentencing Assignment Due!	10%	7-Dec
WEEK 16: FINAL EXAM/EXPERIENCE		
Exam 3	15%	TBA

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