



## **EAST TEXAS A&M** UNIVERSITY

### **CJ 1310-01E CRN 83381** **FUNDAMENTALS OF CRIMINAL LAW**

Course Syllabus: Fall 2025  
Tuesday/Thursday 9:30am-10:45am  
Ferguson 313

#### **INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

**Instructor:** J. Alex Purdon, Ph.D.

**Office Location:** Ferguson 229

**Office Hours:** 12:00pm-2:00pm Tuesday/Thursday or by virtual appointment.

**Office Phone:** (903) 886.5332

**University Email Address:** James.Purdon@etamu.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***

Fradella, H. F. (2022). *Criminal law: An introduction to key concepts and cases* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is the study of criminal law including application of definitions, statutory elements, defenses and penalties using Texas statutes, the Model Penal Code, and case law. The course also analyzes the philosophical and historical development of criminal law and criminal culpability.

#### **Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Identify the elements of crimes and defense under Texas statutes, Model Penal Code, and case law.

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2. Classify offense and articulate penalties for various crimes.
3. Compare culpable mental states when assigning criminal responsibility.
4. Assess the impact of history and philosophy on current criminal laws.
5. Evaluate the application of criminal law to other areas of criminal justice such as law enforcement and corrections.

## **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.

## **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**

Attendance is an essential part of the learning process; thus, students are expected to attend class regularly. This ensures students stay engaged with the course material through the instructor's interactive lectures, benefit from in-class discussions and activities, and learn from guest speakers from the field.

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While some absences are unavoidable, you are responsible for making up missed absences and notifying the professor. Students are allotted three (3) unexcused absences before seeing a reduction in their class attendance score. Missing more than 25% of the class will result in a failing grade or removal from the class.

Class participation is an essential part of the learning process. Students are expected to have completed all the required readings and to be prepared to contribute to class activities and discussions. The goal of class participation is to engage in critical thinking, practice communication, and develop collaborative skills, all essential elements for professional success. Thus, participation will be assessed based on the frequency, relevance, and quality of the contributions to class discussions, group activities, and online platforms. **Mere attendance alone without active engagement will result in a poor grade.** The instructor reserves the right to implement class participation strategies if participation falls below expectations.

Altogether, class attendance and participation is worth 10% of the total grade.

### ***Explain It Like a TikTok***

For this creative assignment, students will choose a criminal law concept (e.g., *mens rea*, *homicide*, etc.) and explain it in 60-90 seconds, just like you would in a short-form video platform like TikTok or Instagram Reels. You are charged with breaking down the topic clearly, accurately, and engagingly for a general audience. You are encouraged to record a video, narrate over slides, or use animation tools—but your explanation must be your own and demonstrate a solid grasp of the concept. Do note, you do not need to post to social media—just submit it to the appropriate submission portal on D2L. This assignment is worth 10% of your total grade.

### ***Exams***

There will be two (2) exams over the course of the semester, a Midterm and a Final. 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 are graded based on completeness, accuracy, and coherency. Each exam is worth 15% of the total grade.

### ***Mini Case Analysis***

Students will complete two structured legal analyses of real criminal cases over the course of the semester. Each paper will follow a five-part format: case overview, legal issue, relevant law, analysis, and conclusion. Students may select the cases themselves but must consult with the instructor to ensure the case is appropriate for the assignment. Each paper should be 1-2 pages in length, and together the two analyses will comprise 10% of the total grade.

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### ***Pre/Post Reflection***

This is a two-part reflective assignment that bookends the semester. Students will write an initial reflection at the start of the course articulating their personal understanding and expectations for the class. In other words, students will describe their current understanding of criminal law, initial impressions and thoughts about the course, and what they hope to learn. Then, students will revisit those reflections at the end of the semester to assess how their thinking has evolved. Each reflection should be approximately one (1) page in length and follow APA norms. Each reflection is worth 5% of your total grade.

### ***Presentation***

Students will work in small groups to create, research, and present on one of two topics by the end of the semester. As a class, you will vote on one of two formats for the final presentation assignment:

1. Elements of a Crime: A Breakdown – Your group will select on specific crime (e.g., assault) and present a clear, engaging explanation of its legal elements and application to a real-world case. Importantly, groups cannot present on the same topic. Sign-up sheets will be provided on D2L.
2. Mock Trial Lite – Your group will act out a simplified mock trial using a fictional case, presenting both sides of the case and applying relevant law to argue guilt or innocence.

Whichever format is chosen by class vote, all groups will be assessed on clarity, accuracy, teamwork, and presentation quality. Slides, visuals, or creative components are encouraged. This assignment is worth 10% of your final grade.

### ***Weekly Legal Concept Comparison Log***

Each week, students will complete a brief journal entry comparing three key legal terms or concepts covered in class. For each term, students will 1) define the term in their own words, 2) explain how it is defined or applied under both the Model Penal Code (MPC) and Texas Penal Code, and 3) analyze key differences or similarities, reflecting on how and why state law may differ from the MPC. This assignment should be about 1 page in length and will be worth 10% of your total grade.

## GRADING

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

Table 1: Grade Cut-Offs		
<i>Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<b>A</b>	450-500	90.00% – 100%
<b>B</b>	400-449	80.00% – 89.99%
<b>C</b>	350-399	70.00% – 79.99%
<b>D</b>	300-349	60.00% – 69.99%
<b>F</b>	Below 300	Below 60.00%

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

Table 2: Assessments and Their Values		
<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Attendance & Participation	50	10%
Exams (Midterm & Final)	150 (75 each)	30% (15% each)
Explain It Like a TikTok	50	10%
Mini Case Analysis (x2)	100 (50 each)	20%
Personal Reflection (x2)	50 (25 each)	10% (5% each)
Presentation	50	10%
Weekly Journals (lowest 1 will be dropped)	50	10% (1% each)

Grades can be accessed on D2L.

## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

### LMS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University 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>

LMS Browser Support:

[https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser\\_support.htm](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm)

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Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

[https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom\\_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu](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](mailto: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

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## **COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES**

### **Course Specific Procedures/Policies**

#### ***Attendance and Participation***

Class attendance is a vital part of participation and key to your success in this course. You are expected to attend class regularly and come prepared to engage with the material and your peers.

Attendance will be recorded using a simple attendance roster at the beginning of each class. If you arrive after the roster has circulated, it is your responsibility to speak with me immediately after class to ensure you are marked present. Failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence.

Missing more than 25% of class meetings—including both unexcused absences and chronic lateness—may result in a failing grade or removal from the course in accordance with university policy.

**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.).

#### **Chronic Lateness Policy**

Chronic lateness disrupts the class and undermines your engagement with the material. Arriving late more than three (3) times will begin to impact your attendance grade. For every additional three instances of lateness, your attendance grade will be reduced by 5%. For example: 1-3 late arrivals: no penalty, 4-6 late arrivals: -5%, 7-9 late arrivals, -10%, 10+ late arrivals: -15% (and a required meeting with the instructor).

#### ***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* (22nd ed.) in all papers.

#### ***Extra credit***

**No individualized** extra credit work will be permitted in my class. Why? Extra credit is unfair to the students who do their work diligently all semester long. However, extra credit may be offered to the whole class for a variety of activities that go beyond what is anticipated in the syllabus.

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### **Late or Missed Assignments**

All assignments are due by 11:59 pm on the stated due date unless otherwise noted. Late assignments will be penalized a full letter grade (10%) for every calendar day the assignment is late. After 5 days, late work will not be accepted unless you have made prior arrangements with the instructor.

Each student has **one (1) “Oops” Token** they can use during the semester for a no-questions-asked, **one-week extension** on any assignment (except exams). Simply submit the assignment late within 7 calendar days of the original deadline and comment “Using my Oops Token.” No penalty will be applied, and no explanation is required.

### **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>

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>

### **ETAMU Attendance**

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx).  
<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 East Texas A&M University 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](#)

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### 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**

East Texas A&M University

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

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

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: [studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu)

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

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

## **Nondiscrimination Notice**

East Texas A&M University 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 East Texas A&M University 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)

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46.035 and East Texas A&M University 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 East Texas A&M University campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

### **EAST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SUPPORTS STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH**

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M University, 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](http://www.tamuc.edu/counsel)

### **AI Use IN COURSES**

East Texas A&M University 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 Criminal Law and Punishment		08/25-08/31
Readings: Syllabus	--	--
Readings: Chapter 1	--	--
<b>Personal Reflection #1</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>08/31</b>
WEEK 2: Constitutional Restraints on Criminalization		09/01-09/07
Labor Day-Campus Closed	--	09/01
Readings: Chapter 2	--	--
<b>Journal #1</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>09/07</b>
WEEK 3: Evidence, Acts, and Omissions		09/08-09/14
Readings: Chapter 3	--	--
<b>Journal #2</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>09/14</b>
Week 4: Intent and Causation		09/15-09/19
Readings: Chapter 4	--	--
<b>Journal #3</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>09/19</b>
WEEK 5: Homicide		09/22-09/28
Readings: Chapter 7	--	--
<b>Journal #5</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>09/28</b>
WEEK 6: Rape & Nonconsensual Sex Crimes		09/29-10/05
Readings: Chapter 8	--	--
<b>Journal #6</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>10/05</b>
<b>Mini-Case Analysis #1</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10/05</b>
WEEK 7: Review & Midterm Exam		10/06-10/12
Study!	--	--
<b>Midterm</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>10/09</b>
WEEK 8: Other Crimes Against the Person		10/13-10/19
Readings: Chapter10	--	--
<b>Journal # 7</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>10/19</b>
WEEK 9: Theft & Robbery		10/20-10/26
Readings: Chapter 11	--	--
<b>Journal # 8</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>10/26</b>
WEEK 10: Inchoate Offenses & Accomplice Liability		10/27-11/02
Readings: Chapter 5 & 6	--	--

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<b>Journal # 9</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>11/02</b>
<b>Mini Case Analysis #2</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>11/02</b>
WEEK 11: Defenses of Excuse		<b>11/03-11/09</b>
Readings: Chapter 14	--	--
<b>Journal #10</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>11/09</b>
WEEK 12: No Class! Conference		<b>11/10-11/16</b>
<b>Explain it Like a TikTok</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>11/16</b>
WEEK 13: Defenses of Justification		<b>11/17-11/23</b>
Readings: Chapter 15	--	--
<b>Journal #11</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>11/23</b>
WEEK 14: Presentation Prep/Catch-Up		<b>11/24-11/30</b>
TBA	--	--
<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK 11/26-11/28</b>		
WEEK 15: Presentations		<b>12/01-12/07</b>
<b>Group Presentation</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>12/05</b>
<b>Personal Reflection #2</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>12/05</b>
WEEK 16: FINAL EXAM/EXPERIENCE		
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>12/11 8:00-10:00</b>

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