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Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology  
CRIJ 2364-08  
Fundamentals of Criminal Law  
Spring 2018

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Professor: Kallee Spooner  
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Class Hours: Online  
Classroom: Online  
Office Hours: By appointment

**TEXTBOOK**

No textbook required. Students are expected to read PowerPoints and additional materials posted in Blackboard.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course covers substantive criminal law, which includes an overview of law, definition of crime, general principles of criminal responsibility, elements of major crimes, punishments, and conditions or circumstances which may excuse criminal responsibility or mitigate punishment. Particular emphasis is placed on Texas penal law.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

1. Understand the purpose and fundamental principles of criminal law in the United States.
2. Explain and distinguish different types of crime.
3. Find and use resources to explore criminal law in depth.
4. Discuss various defenses and mitigation of criminal responsibility.
5. Apply course material to critically assess cases involving possible criminal liability.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Online class participation, exams, reading lesson materials, journal reflections, and discussion boards.

**GRADING:**

Grades will be based on the following:

Graded Content	% of Final Grade	Date
Exam 1	10%	February 25
Exam 2	15%	April 1
Exam 3 (Final)	20%	May 9
Journal Reflections	25%	Monthly
Discussion Boards	30%	Weekly

Grading scale:

A = 89.5%–100%  
B = 79.5%–89.4%  
C = 69.5%–79.4%  
D = 59.5%–69.4%  
F = 59.4% and below

Students are highly encouraged to track their progress throughout the semester via Blackboard. Under no circumstance will requests for extra points or “grade-bargaining” be allowed.

**DISCUSSION BOARDS – 30%**

There are eight discussion board forums throughout the semester. Discussion board posts are visible to the professor and every student enrolled in the course. The purpose of discussion boards is to encourage interaction and exchange ideas. Discussion board prompts and instructions will be posted in the weekly course content in Blackboard one week before the due date. Using the Blackboard discussion board (located in the weekly course content), students must post their thoughts about the questions and respond to at least two other students’ posts. Original posts must be at least one paragraph (i.e., about 4–5 full sentences) and comments must be at least two sentences and must respond to the content of the original post. Students will be graded based on the content of their posts, timeliness, engagement, and quality of writing. All students are expected to use appropriate language and respect the views of others. Rude or abusive posts will result in an automatic 0 for the assignment.

Discussion board posts are expected to be completed by 11:59pm on the due date. Late assignments will be graded as 0. Grades and feedback will be posted in Blackboard within one week after the assignment due date.

**JOURNAL REFLECTIONS – 25%**

There are four journal reflection assignments throughout the semester. Journal reflection posts are not public – only you and the professor will see them. The purpose of reflection assignments is to strengthen students’ retention of material and critical thinking skills. Reflection prompts and instructions will be posted in the weekly course content in Blackboard one week before the due date. Using the Blackboard journal tool (located in the weekly course content), each question should be answered with a minimum of two full sentences. Students will be

graded based on the depth of their responses, completeness (i.e., adequately answering question prompts), and quality of writing.

Journal reflections should be posted by 11:59pm on the due date. Late assignments will be graded as 0. Grades and feedback will be posted in Blackboard within one week after the assignment due date.

### **EXAMS – 45%**

There are three online exams in this class. Each exam will cover prior reading and outline materials. Exam review outlines and exams will be posted in the weekly class materials in Blackboard one week before the due date. For exam dates and topics included in the exam see the [Outline of Topics to be Covered Each Week\\*](#).

**MAKE-UP EXAMS** are only possible when:

- (1) There is an emergency or other university-approved reason that makes it necessary for the student to miss the exam.
- (2) The student notified the professor in writing prior to missing the exam. If the emergency makes it impossible for the student to provide notification before the exam, then written notification must be provided within 5 days of the missed exam.

If the above conditions are not met, then the student will receive a zero grade for the test.

**STUDENT ACADEMIC POLICIES** concerning Attendance, Academic Honesty, Disabled Student and Services for Disabled Students, and Absences on Religious Holy Days may be found at: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/aps/aps-students.html>

**USE OF TELEPHONES AND TEXT MESSAGES IN ACADEMIC CLASSROOMS AND FACILITIES**  
<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/aps/aps-curriculum.html>

### **OUTLINE OF TOPICS TO BE COVERED EACH WEEK\***

Due dates for assignments are also posted in the Blackboard course calendar.

Week	Start Date	Topic	Assignments Due by 11:59pm on due date	DUE DATE
Week 1	1/17	Introduction to the Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read Syllabus</li><li>• <i>Icebreaker Activity</i></li></ul>	1/21
Week 2	1/22	The Nature & History of Criminal Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read Lesson 1</li><li>• <i>Discussion Board Posts</i></li></ul>	1/28
Week 3	1/29	Criminal Liability & the Essence of Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read Lesson 2</li><li>• <i>Discussion Board Posts</i></li></ul>	2/4

Week	Start Date	Topic	Assignments Due by 11:59pm on due date	DUE DATE
Week 4	2/5	Expanding the Concept of Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Lesson 3</li> <li><i>Journal Reflection 1</i></li> </ul>	2/11
Week 5	2/12	Expanding Criminal Liability: Inchoate Offenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Lesson 4</li> <li><i>Discussion Board Posts</i></li> </ul>	2/18
Week 6	2/19	Justifications and Defenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Lesson 5</li> <li><b>EXAM #1</b></li> </ul>	2/25
Week 7	2/26	Defenses: Excuses and Insanity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Lesson 6</li> <li><i>Discussion Board Posts</i></li> </ul>	3/4
Week 8	3/5	Crimes Against Persons: Homicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Lesson 7</li> <li><i>Journal Reflection 2</i></li> </ul>	3/11
	3/12	Spring Break		3/18
Week 9	3/19	Crimes Against Persons: Assault, Sex Offenses & Other Crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Lesson 8</li> <li><i>Discussion Board Posts</i></li> </ul>	3/25
Week 10	3/26	Property & Computer Crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Lesson 9</li> <li><b>EXAM #2</b></li> </ul>	4/1
Week 11	4/2	Offenses Against Public Order & the Administration of Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Lesson 10</li> <li><i>Discussion Board Posts</i></li> </ul>	4/8
Week 12	4/9	Offenses against Public Morality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Lesson 11</li> <li><i>Journal Reflection 3</i></li> </ul>	4/15
Week 13	4/16	Terrorism and Human Trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Lesson 12</li> <li><i>Discussion Board Posts</i></li> </ul>	4/22
Week 14	4/23	Victims & the Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Lesson 13</li> <li><i>Discussion Board Posts</i></li> </ul>	4/29
Week 15	4/30	Punishment & Sentencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Lesson 14</li> <li><i>Journal Reflection 4</i></li> </ul>	5/6

Week	Start Date	Topic	Assignments Due by 11:59pm on due date	DUE DATE
Week 16	5/7	Review for Final Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FINAL EXAM due Wednesday, May 9 by 11:59pm</li> </ul>	5/9

\* This syllabus is subject to change. You will be notified of any change by email and/or Blackboard.