

**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
**CRIMINAL JUSTICE 4310 – AMERICAN COURTS**  
**SULROSS STATE UNIVERSITY – RIO GRANDE COLLEGE**  
**SPRING - 2021**

January 11 through May 13, 2021 - Online Course

**INSTRUCTOR:** Darren P. Kohut, Adjunct Professor  
Office Hours – by appointment  
Email: [dkohut@sulross.edu](mailto:dkohut@sulross.edu)  
(830)422-8652 (voicemail or text)  
**\* The most effective way to contact me is by phone or text - please remember to identify yourself when sending me a text**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course will take an expansive and detailed look at the court system of the United States and its function within the criminal justice system which will include the examination of its establishment and early history, court administration, court procedures, and the varying levels of the court system (local, state, and federal).

**By the end of this course, you will be able to:**

- 1) Establish a fundamental knowledge of how the American court systems operates within our society;
- 2) Learn and develop an understanding of the adversarial system and how it shapes the operation of our legal system;
- 3) Establish a knowledge and understanding of areas of operation of both state and federal courts;
- 4) Learn the key terms and be able to identify and distinguish the various duties of the positions involved in the court system to include judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, defendants, victims, law enforcement and corrections staff. violence.

**COURSE NOTES**

Being that this is a web-based course, the course will be dependent on the class blackboard page. All course communication and instruction will take place through blackboard and the student's registered Sul Ross email address. Assignments/instruction will be posted on a weekly basis, and unless instructed otherwise, all weekly assignments will be submitted by the specified due date utilizing the appropriate web-based assets on the class blackboard site. Please check the course blackboard site frequently for additional required material, updates,

and the like. Additionally, although this is an online course, there will be an online lecture component (i.e. Zoom or Google Duo based). Attendance at these lectures/virtual meetings is not mandatory but greatly encouraged as they will serve to greatly enhance the class experience and learning objectives. All virtual meetings will be recorded and available via the course BB page for viewing at the student's convenience.

**Please make sure to have your official SRSU email forwarded to your preferred email address (if different) to receive important updates, class cancellations (if applicable), etc.**

This course is dependent on the main text for material, and you are required to read all reading assignments. Without completing the required reading assignments, the chances of gaining the necessary understanding of the components and successfully negotiating the course will be extremely slim. All text material is fair game for all exams and/or quizzes. Electronic versions, if you prefer, are acceptable.

### **TEXTBOOK:**

America's Courts and the Criminal Justice System, 13th Edition  
David W. Neubauer and Henry F. Fradella  
Cengage, 2019  
ISBN 13: 978-133-7557894

**EVERY STUDENT IS EXPECTED TO OBTAIN HIS/HER OWN COPY OF THE COURSE TEXT BOOK AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.** This course is textbook dependent and no sympathy will be shown for those who procrastinate and fall behind in their work because they do not have their textbook! I have no preference if you buy, rent, or acquire the online version - it is completely up to the student's preference, as long as you have the material.

### ***Grading Policy***

The final grades for the course will be determined based on the compilation of the following components:

- “Weekly” assignments/quizzes - over the life of the course, there will be numerous assignment/quiz grades, which will be averaged together and constitute 50% of your final grade
- Midterm Exam - to be announced (25% of final grade)
- Final Exam – to be announced (25% of final grade)
- It should go without saying, but the past dictates that I stress to all students how important it is to complete **ALL** of the assignments and the exams. **Do not expect to do well in this course otherwise.**

- Final grades will be determined by obtaining the average of the weekly assignments/quiz grades and multiplying by .50, and multiplying the Midterm and Final exam grades each by .25. The three percentages are then added together to determine the final numerical grade.

**GRADING SCALE:**

100-90 = A

89-80 = B

79-70 = C

69-60 = D

59 and below = F

If a student for any reason fails to take an exam, fails to complete an exam, or fails to submit an exam in the designated and allotted time period, or is dropped off-line during an exam, the resulting grade will be an "F" for that exam. The instructor assumes no responsibility for technical problems or student omissions. **For this reason, it is highly recommended that exams be taken at the SRSU computer labs at your respective campuses!**

**Course Policies:****PARTICIPATION, PREPARATION AND BEHAVIOR**

To be successful at learning and understanding the material in this class, it is essential that you complete all reading assignments and complete all assignments/exams. I reserve the right to implement any additional teaching/learning tools deemed necessary (i.e. online discussions, message boards, etc.) as the class progresses, and if so, participation will be required. If this becomes a reality, your active participation, along with your willingness to engage in thoughtful discussions regarding the topics will be taken into account at all times during the semester. In addition, due to the sensitive nature of our course, it is entirely possible that some of us in the class may at some point have been a victim of or otherwise exposed at some level to any measure of criminal activity. With this in mind, it is expected that each student will respect the positions, experiences, and feelings of all students in the event that online discussions become a part of the course.

**Please review the undergraduate catalog concerning conduct which adversely affects the university community.**

**Communication with the Instructor –**

In case you need to communicate with me, for quickest results feel free to contact me by **calling or texting the above listed cell number**. You are free to use my Sul Ross email account; however, this method is not recommended if you are expecting a quick response.

When communicating with me via text, please identify yourself, as many times in the past I receive texts from unknown students asking important questions, and I like to know who I am communicating with. ***If you have any questions or concerns about anything in the course, please do not hesitate to contact me – I am here to assist you and have no problem whatsoever responding to phone calls or texts.***

## **SYLLABUS CHANGES**

I reserve the right and have the discretion to change this syllabus. While every effort will be made to follow this syllabus as closely as possible, it is sometimes the case that the syllabus must be modified. In the case that the syllabus needs to be adjusted, I will announce such adjustments via the class BB page. I will make every effort to ensure that any changes to the syllabus benefit the class as a whole. It is the student's responsibility to monitor the class BB page regularly for all syllabus changes. Failure to obtain syllabus changes because of inattention/irresponsibility does not constitute a defense against missed assignments, test dates, and other applicable changes.