



Fundamentals of Criminal Law
Spring 2025
Sul Ross State University
SYLLABUS

CJ 1310: Section: 001; Class meets: Mondays/Wednesdays 11-12:15 in MAB 107

Professor: Benjamin Barrientes

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Course Description:

We will study the nature of Criminal Law. Our emphasis will be on gaining understanding of the many layers that this discipline occupies in our legal system. The content for the course is an outline of these layers and my intent is to provide you with a broad scope of the basic purposes, concepts, doctrines, and analytical techniques of the substantive criminal law.

Course Objectives- upon completion of the course students will be able:

1. To articulate on the body of law classified as criminal law;
2. Think/write critically about historical foundation/basis of Criminal Law;
3. Think/write critically about the biosocial perspectives on Criminal Behaviors;
4. Appreciate concepts, doctrines that inform judgments in Criminal Law cases;
5. Through group inquiry participate in a dialogue on topics of Criminal Law;
6. Work on developing logical precision in expressing and writing their ideas about Crime.

Texas Domain III Competency 19: The teacher understands and applies critical thinking knowledge and skills to plan, organize/implement instruction, and assess learning.

Texas Domain III Competency 23: The teacher understands and applies knowledge of core concepts of Criminology including ways that individuals and groups achieve their goals through distinct and unique systems and approaches for thought.

Americans with Disability Act Statement:

In order to receive accommodations on exams or assignments, proper documentation must first be provided to the Office of Counseling and Accessibility Services (Office: 112 Ferguson Hall); to set up an accommodation meeting call (432) 837-8203. Students must then present this documentation to the instructor as soon as possible so that accommodations may be arranged.

Course Policies:

Sul Ross State University has a zero-tolerance policy on cheating, plagiarism, or collusion. Procedures for dealing with these acts are addressed in the Scholastic Dishonesty Policy.

No Electronic Devices:

Our classroom will resemble a Seminar setting. Our subject matter is complicated, our reading is dense, our discussions will be lively (and stimulating); thus, it is necessary to omit the trappings (and distractions) of electronic devices during our meetings.

Our duty to each other:

With the advent of email, the communication between teacher and student is better served. I will respond to your communication(s); I expect for you to respond to mine. I cannot stress the importance of communication more than that.

Course Requirements:

There's no Required text for this class; required readings and or materials will be posted on Blackboard.

Students are expected to communicate with me and complete all assignments in a timely manner. Students are expected to prepare and participation fully in the class. Please report any technical issues as soon as possible by emailing me immediately.

Grading for this course will be based on the quality of student's work: *Exams and a Critical Analysis paper (i.e. a Critique) that's roughly 10-15 pages in length.

The "critique" will be an opportunity for you to write an analysis on a topic in Criminal Law (I will be posting possible topics throughout the month of January 2025).

Grading system: A: 100-90 B: 89-80 C: 79-70 D: 69-60 F: 59 or less

Course Assignments:

You will be responsible for developing a Journal;

Midterm Exam: will consist of brief essay responses;

Final Exam: will consist of an individual presentation;

Each student will write a critical analysis paper.

Grading Scale:

Journal Project/Class participation: 25%;

Midterm Exam: 25%;

Critique: 25%;

Final Exam Symposium (individual presentations): 25%.

I welcome inquiries. The quality of your inquiry provides me with very interesting evidence of your concentration/focus. You are expected to read the material and ask questions. I welcome hearing from you often; my hope is that your communication with me is substantive.

Communication is an important reflection of character. I appreciate it when students respond to my emails. My pledge is to communicate with students whenever they reach out to me; it's possible that there could be a delay, but I will respond in as timely a manner as possible.

Electronic devices have become indispensable in our daily lives, I understand that; however, during our time together there should be minimal distractions. Internal distractions are hard to overcome (personal musings, the slings and arrows of external daily preoccupations, and the mind's natural tendency for distraction is part of our existence). My preference is to help students to minimize distraction(s) and to encourage a revaluation of focus (and concentration).

An important aspect for you in this class is to keep a journal as a tool.

As part of your preparation for your exams, discussions, and brief critiques, I highly recommend that you cultivate the habit of keeping a journal.

With this journal you will discipline yourself to write notes about salient points in your readings; and/or key concepts that you will want to commit to memory.

By maintaining a chronicle of significant points of learning along the way you will benefit most when we reach exam and final project due dates.

PLEASE NOTE: Students will have a separate course schedule provided.

**This course schedule serves as our guide; however, it is subject to change at instructor's discretion.