



The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 3365G-001
Special Topics: Criminal Law and Sentencing
Winter 2022
Thursdays 2:30-5:30pm, SSC3024

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Silcox
Office Hours: TBA. [Book via: Calendly](#)
Department of Sociology, Office: TBA
Email: jsilcox5@uwo.ca

Course Description:

This course explores the philosophical underpinnings, history, and current practices in Canadian criminal law and sentencing. Students will examine concepts in criminal law, such as actus reus and mens rea and how they influence variations in sentencing in different contexts. While we will mostly examine the Canadian landscape, we may also compare with international ones. Some of the topics that will be raised include women-only and medical legal defences, mandatory minimum sentences, dangerous and long-term offenders, and the sentencing of youth, Indigenous peoples, people of colour, people with mental illness (incl. therapeutic courts), and other marginalized groups. These topics, and others, will be explored along with how changing social norms and political climates influence them.

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth year standing in a module in sociology or criminology.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Antirequisite(s): N/A

Course Format:

This class will meet online Thursdays between 2:30pm and 5:30pm until the end of January at which point the university will decide if our class will continue online or move to in-person learning. If we move to in-person learning, live streaming of the classes will be available if the technology is available and functioning in the classroom. Recordings of live classes, whether online or in-person, may not be available and students are responsible for making arrangements with peers to share notes if they miss class.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Have a broad understanding of Canada's criminal law and sentencing practices and guidelines
- Understand the philosophy and legal principles impacting criminal law and sentencing
- Appreciate how special populations are treated in the criminal trial process and sentencing
- Synthesize and critically evaluate complex material in presentations and essays

Required Text(s):

Required readings will be available via Western Libraries or as PDFs/URLs on OWL.

Method of Evaluation:

Syllabus/OWL Contract Quiz (Jan. 23)	1%
Quizzes (2 @ 7.5%; Feb. 6; Mar. 20)	15%
Presentation	19%
Argumentative Essay (Mar. 3)	30%
Final Exam (exam period TBA)	35%

Evaluation Breakdown:

****IMPORTANT NOTE #:** Any changes to the method of evaluation, breakdown or due dates, as well as all expectations and guidelines will be provided on OWL.

1. Syllabus & OWL Contract Quiz: 1%

Students will complete a quiz based on information found on both the course syllabus/outline and OWL course page. **Due Date:** Jan. 23 @ 11:55pm

2. Quizzes (2 @ 7.5% each): 15%

This semester, there will be 3 quizzes to test your understanding of course material, including lessons, student presentations, documentaries or media clips.

Due Dates: Quiz #1 → Feb. 6 @ 11:55pm; Quiz #2 → Mar. 20 @ 11:55pm
If using an SRA, the due dates become: Quiz #1 Feb. 8 @ 11:55pm; Quiz #2 Mar. 22 @ 11:55pm

3. Presentation: 19% --- refer to guidelines posted on OWL for specific requirements

In small groups, students will prepare a 20-30 minute presentation to be delivered to the class on a pre-determined topic. Students will sign up for presentation dates during the first week of class.

4. Argumentative Essay: 30% --- refer to guidelines posted on OWL for specific requirements

This term, students will write one argumentative essay, based on pre-determined topics, making use of both class material and academic sources. Failing to provide in-text citations will result in a failing grade for the assignment. Students will upload their essays on OWL.

All written work, including presentations will be subject to similarity testing on OWL via Turnitin.com.

Due Date: Mar. 3 @ 11:55pm on OWL

If a student uses an SRA, the due date becomes Mar. 5 @ 11:55pm on OWL

5. Final Exam: 35%

The final exam will be comprised of multiple choice and true/false questions, and may include short answer and long answer questions. All material covered is fair game for testing. E.g., lessons (including embedded video links), required reading, and documentaries/films. The exam will take place in person (unless otherwise stated) during the official exam schedule.

Computer-marked multiple-choice quizzes, tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

How to Contact Me & Get Important Information:

- All important information can be found on the OWL course page.
- Check OWL regularly for course updates.

If a student has a question not addressed on the outline, in class lessons, or on OWL, they may:

- Ask a question before, during, or after class
- Visit virtual office hours
- Send an email with the **subject line SOC3365** (follow up if no response within 48 hours)

Important Policies

Policies for Assignment Deadlines:

Self-Reported Absences

- Students can use 'self-reported absences' (SRAs) for missed or late assignments and quizzes without documentation. SRAs excuse late or missed assignments for up to 48 hours as per school policies. E.g., If a student uses an SRA and misses the essay due date of Mar. 3 @ 11:55pm, the essay becomes due Mar. 5 @ 11:55pm. The same applies for missed quizzes.
- For more information on SRAs, see below.

Late Essays

- If a student does not have permission to submit late (i.e., an SRA or official accommodations), late assignments will incur a penalty of **10% grade reduction per day late** (including weekends). Papers will not be accepted 5 days after the due date.
- All late assignments must be uploaded on OWL.

Late Presentations or Missed Quizzes

- Late presentations will NOT be accepted without an SRA or approved academic accommodation.

- Students will not be permitted to write a missed quiz without an SRA or approved academic accommodation.

EXTENSION REQUESTS: Requests for extensions must be made **well before the due date** and may be granted if there are legitimate medical or compassionate grounds. Documentation must be submitted.
→ see Policy on Accommodation and Academic Considerations below.

A Note on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (www.turnitin.com).

Policies on Examinations

- All tests and examinations will take place in person on campus unless otherwise indicated.
- If a student misses an exam, they will NOT be permitted to write a make-up exam unless they obtain accommodation for medical illness or academic consideration from Academic Counselling.
- Remember you cannot use SRAs for examinations.
- Exams will be closed book (i.e., lessons, notes, the internet, etc. are not allowed) and to be completed without the use of technology.
- Students without a student ID or governmental ID may be barred from writing the exam.
- As stated above, computer-marked multiple-choice quizzes, tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

No electronic devices may be used for in-person examinations. Online quizzes or exams on OWL may be subject to electronic proctoring or other academic honesty technologies (e.g., browser lockdown, among others).

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class:

Laptops are permitted in class, but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are turned off at the beginning of class.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.html.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a *Self-Reported Absence (SRA)* form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the [Senate policy](#) are met. Two important exceptions to this rule: SRAs will NOT be allowed for final examinations or assessments worth more than 30% of a given course. Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a [Student Medical Certificate](#) (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds) to your Home Faculty Academic Counselling office.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf

Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website: www.registrar.uwo.ca/academics/examinations/accommodated_exams.html

Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site: www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Mental Health

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western (www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.