# CRJS 6910 - Law and Criminal Justice

## Fall 2026 Syllabus, Section 01, CRN 43770,

Credit hours: 3

## Instructor

**Dr. Christopher Bellas**

Distinguished Professor

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## Public Instructor Information

Ph.D. Political Science, Kent State University
M.A. Political Science, Kent State University
M.S. Criminal Justice, Youngstown State University
B.A. Political Science, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania
A.S. Business Administration, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania
Post Baccalaureate Certificate Paralegal Studies, Kent State University (Approved by the American Bar Association; 30 semester hours of law courses)

## Course Description

6910. Law and Criminal Justice. An historical analysis of criminal law as a social control. An overview of substantive criminal law and criminal procedural law in the United States. 3 s.h.

## Course Readings

| Group | Title | Author | ISBN |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Law, Social Science, and the Criminal Courts (2020) | Alisa Smith | 978-1531014834 |
| | Striking the Balance: Debating Criminal Justice and Law (2018) | Mathew Lippman | 978-1506357478 |

The course readings are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, research developments, current events, and/or to ensure better learning.

## Reading Assignments LSS = Law, Social Science & the Criminal Courts textbook; SB = Striking the Balance: Debating Criminal Justice & Law textbook

| Day | Date | Reading(s) | Proposed Topic | Due/To Prepare for Class |
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| Mon | 8/24 | Ch. 1 A Brief Introduction to the Courts and Evidence (LSS) | A Review of the Criminal Court Process | Read the syllabus carefully.<br>Students need to come to class prepared having read the assigned readings in the textbook and be familiar with the discussion questions at the end of the assigned readings. Students should participate in class discussions. |
| Mon | 8/31 | Ch. 2 The History of Social Science in the Law (LSS) | How much weight do courts give social science as evidence in legal outcomes? | Students need to come to class prepared having read the assigned readings in the textbook and be familiar with the discussion questions at the end of the assigned readings. Students should participate in class discussions. |
| Mon | 9/7 | NO CLASS; LABOR DAY | NO CLASS; LABOR DAY | |

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| Mon | 9/14 | Ch. 3 The Legal Aspects of Social Science (LSS)<br>Ch. 4 Social Science as Evidence in Court (LSS) | How courts utilize social science compared to other hard science in court | Students need to come to class prepared having read the assigned readings in the textbook and be familiar with the discussion questions at the end of the assigned readings. Students should participate in class discussions. |
| Mon | 9/21 | 2.11 Crimes Against Public Order and Morality (SB)<br>2.1 Constitutional Restrictions: Assault Weapons (SB)<br>2.2 Constitutional Restrictions Hate Crimes (SB) | Balancing the Rights of Individuals with Public Safety | Students need to come to class on this day prepared to verbally debate the constitutional issues in the assigned readings. Students will be graded on their participation on these cases. |
| Mon | 9/28 | Ch. 5 Expectations of Privacy and the Fourth Amendment (LSS) | A Defendant's Fourth Amendment Rights | Students need to come to class prepared having read the assigned readings in the textbook and be familiar with the discussion questions at the end of the assigned readings. Students should participate in class discussions. |
| Mon | 10/5 | Ch. 6 Police Stops (LSS)<br>Ch. 7 The Exclusionary Rule (LSS) | Police Stops and Excluding Evidence | Students need to come to class prepared having read the assigned readings in the textbook and be familiar with the discussion questions at the end of the assigned readings. Students should participate in class discussions. |
| Mon | 10/12 | Ch. 9 Right to Counsel (LSS)<br>Ch. 10 The Right to A Jury Trial (LSS) | A Defendant's Sixth Amendment Rights | Students need to come to class prepared having read the assigned readings in the textbook and be familiar with the discussion questions at the end of the assigned readings. Students should participate in class discussions. |
| Mon | 10/19 | 3.2 Juries: Peremptory Challenges (SB)<br>3.3 Jury Nullification (SB) | Jury Selection | Students need to come to class prepared having read the assigned readings in the textbook and be familiar with the discussion questions at the end of the assigned readings. Students should participate in class discussions. |
| Mon | 10/26 | Ch. 8 The Right to a Fair Trial (LSS)<br>3.1 Plea Bargaining (SB) | A Defendant's Sixth Amendment Right to a Fair Trial | Students need to come to class prepared having read the assigned readings in the textbook and be familiar with the discussion questions at the end of the assigned readings. Students should participate in class discussions. |
| Mon | 11/2 | 2.8 Felony Murder (SB)<br>2.7 Assisted Suicide (SB)<br>2.10 Chemical Endangerment (SB) | Crimes Against Persons | Students need to come to class on this day prepared to verbally debate the constitutional issues in the assigned readings. Students will be graded on their oral participation regarding the cases. |
| Mon | 11/9 | 2.4 Battered Women's Syndrome (SB)<br>2.6 Entrapement (SB)<br>2.9 The "Gay Panic" Defense (SB) | Criminal Defenses | Students need to come to class prepared having read the assigned readings in the textbook and be familiar with the discussion questions at the end of the assigned readings. Students should participate in class discussions. |

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| Mon | 11/16 | Ch. 14 Life or Death: The Ultimate Punishment (LSS)<br>4.3 Capital Punishment: The Death Penalty (SB) | The Death Penalty in the U.S. | Students need to come to class prepared having read the assigned readings in the textbook and be familiar with the discussion questions at the end of the assigned readings. Students should participate in class discussions. |
| Mon | 11/23 | 4.4 The Death Penalty for the Rape of a Child (SB)<br>4.5 Capital Punishment & Lethal Injection (SB) | The Administration of the Death Penalty | Students need to come to class prepared having read the assigned readings in the textbook and be familiar with the discussion questions at the end of the assigned readings. Students should participate in class discussions. |
| Mon | 11/30 | Ch. 11 Eyewitness and Mistaken Identification (LSS)<br>Ch. 12 Miranda and False Confessions (LSS) | Errors and Wrongful Convictions | Students need to come to class prepared having read the assigned readings in the textbook and be familiar with the discussion questions at the end of the assigned readings. Students should participate in class discussions. |
| Mon | 12/7 | Final | wrap up of the course | Students need to come to class prepared having read the assigned readings in the textbook and be familiar with the discussion questions at the end of the assigned readings. Students should participate in class discussions. |

The course schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better learning.