

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
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. 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	



Mon	9/14	Ch. 3 The Legal Aspects of Social Science (LSS) 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) 2.1 Constitutional Restrictions: Assault Weapons (SB) 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) 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) 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) 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) 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) 2.7 Assisted Suicide (SB) 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) 2.6 Entrapment (SB) 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.



Mon	11/16	Ch. 14 Life or Death: The Ultimate Punishment (LSS) 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) 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) 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.