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SOCI 312.01: Criminal Adjudication

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Sociology 312: Criminal Adjudication, Autumn 2016

Natural Sciences - 302

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM or by appointment

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Phone: 406-243-2618

Note: When contacting UM instructors, teaching assistants, or staff by email, a student should use his or her UM “official” (eg.: umontana or umconnect) email address.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The purpose of this course is to critically examine the process of criminal adjudication. Adjudication is the legal process of resolving a dispute. The course consists of three units. Unit I examines the nature of justice and the evolution of law and courts. This unit also discusses the structure of American courts and provides a primer on doing legal research. Unit II focuses on those who work within criminal courts--prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, and others. Unit III discusses pretrial processes and the adjudication of cases by plea or trial. Guest speakers who work in criminal adjudication will make presentations throughout the semesters and class discussions will be used to examine certain controversies in adjudication. Students should leave this course with a thorough understanding of the process of adjudicating criminal cases in the American criminal justice system. Students will also learn to do legal research and further hone academic research skills.

TEXTBOOK AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Hemmens, Craig, David Brody, and Cassia Spohn. 2013. *Criminal Courts: A Contemporary Perspective*, 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

This text will be necessary to follow along in class, complete study guides, and prepare for exams. Note that the textbook serves as a supplement to, but not a substitute for, the material presented in lecture.

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|----------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Reading Assignments: | Unit I: Chapters 1 to 4 | Unit III: Chapters 10 to 12 (maybe 13) |
| | Unit II: Chapters 5 to 9 | |

TESTS AND LEGAL RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT

Three tests consisting of a combination of true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions will be administered during the course of the semester. Each test is worth 100 points. The third test will be administered during Finals Week.

Students will also be required to complete two research assignments. One of the assignments is a legal research exercise that includes writing a paper, demonstrating the student's ability to research, comprehend and synthesize legal sources. The other assignment is an academic research exercise that requires students to conduct research into a specific topic covered in class in academic journals or databases of their choosing. The second assignment also includes a writing component. Both of the assignments are worth 50 points. More information about each assignment will be provided early in the semester.

Students will also be graded on attendance and participation. Students are expected to attend all classes, as attendance and engagement are essential to a student's success. Attendance will be taken sporadically throughout the semester. Students are expected to have read the relevant material before each class and are encouraged to participate regularly. There is a maximum of 50 points for attendance and participation that will be graded holistically based on the student's performance throughout the semester.

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| Tests (3 x 100) | 300 |
| <u>Attendance and Assignments (3 x 50)</u> | <u>150</u> |
| Total | 450 |

GRADING

Students' grades will be based on the number of points earned throughout the semester. Grades will be distributed based on the percentage of points received using a +/- grading scale (see below). In the case a student is on the cusp of a better or worse grade, the instructor reserves the right to increase or decrease his or her grade based on semester long attendance, participation, and overall performance.

| | | | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| A: 93+ | A-: 92-90 | B+: 89-87 | B: 86-83 | B-: 82-80 | C+: 79-77 |
| C: 76-73 | C-: 72-70 | D+: 69-67 | D: 66-63 | D-: 62-60 | F: >60 |

A FEW OTHER CLASS POLICIES

If a student will not be able to take a test on time, prior notification of the professor is required. A message can be left on voice mail or email 24 hours a day. Failure to provide prior notification can result in the student receiving zero points for that exam. In the case of an illness (verified by a doctor's note) or other unforeseen emergencies where the student is unable to take the test before or on the day of the exam, a short answer exam will be given.

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or 406.243.2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The UM [Student Conduct Code](http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php) is available at: http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Teaching and learning are most likely to take place where the classroom environment is one characterized by mutual respect and freedom from unnecessary distractions. Below are some comments regarding the responsibilities of instructors and students in maintaining a good classroom environment. The instructor and teaching assistant, and preceptor will work hard to adhere to these guidelines and students will be expected to do likewise. Vital to the whole notion of a university is the free exchange of ideas. Such an exchange is more likely in an atmosphere free from ridicule, insults, or personal attacks. Instructors must deal with their students in a respectful fashion. Likewise, students must demonstrate respect in their communications with instructors, guest speakers, and other students.

Late arrivals and early departures decrease the learning time available, interrupt the flow of class, and are distracting to all. Both the instructor and the student need to be in the classroom and ready to begin class at the scheduled starting time. Except in the case of sudden illness or other emergency, early departures should be avoided. If because of extraordinary circumstances, a student knows that he or she has to leave early, that student should let the instructor know before class and sit in a location where he or she can depart with minimal interruption. The instructor should be careful to avoid keeping the students in class past the scheduled ending time. In turn, students should refrain from packing up their belongings and/or leaving prior to being dismissed by the instructor.

It is also distracting when students engage in private conversations, use cell phones, listen to headphones, surf the internet on laptop computers or other devices, or read the newspaper or other non-class materials during class. Cell phones, pagers, and similar devices must be adjusted so that they do not ring.

beep, or buzz audibly during class. The exercise of common courtesy on the part of both the instructor and the students will enhance the success of this class.