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### **SOCI 438.01: Seminar in Criminal and Delinquency - Issues in Criminal Law**

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# Sociology 438: Issues in Criminal Law (Spring 2017)

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This seminar course is designed to encourage discussion and analysis of a number of specific issues that can arise in criminal law. Among the legal concepts that will be discussed are: necessity, duress, actus reus, negligence, omission, mens rea, causation, conspiracy, complicity, and attempted crime.

Specific objectives:

- Students will develop a thorough understanding of important legal concepts by reading about, discussing, and researching legal controversial issues in the law.
- Students will enhance their oral communication skills by participating in class discussions.
- Students will learn the basics of doing legal and academic research by participating in a several library tutorials.
- Students will learn to distinguish reliable from unreliable sources of information about legal issues.
- Students will develop their writing skills by writing two essay exams and writing, revising, and resubmitting four papers.

## READINGS

The required books for this class are:

Katz, Leo. 1987. *Bad Acts and Guilty Minds: Conundrums of the Criminal Law*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers. 2015. *A Pocket Style Manual. 7th Ed.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

In order to fully participate in class discussions, students are required to read the assignment prior to the class during which that particular material will be discussed.

## QUIZZES

To encourage students to come to class well prepared, five quizzes will be administered without warning throughout the semester. Quizzes are worth a total of 25 points and will cover the current reading assignment.

## CLASS DISCUSSIONS

Since much of the learning in this course will take place through guided class discussion, active and informed participation in such discussions is required. I will evaluate each student's level of participation for each day of the class on a 0 to 1 point scale. A student not present will receive 0 points for that day. The maximum number of participation points available is 25.

## PAPERS

Each student will be required to write, revise and resubmit a series of four 2 to 6-page (typed, double-spaced) papers analyzing the law regarding a specific legal controversy. Because SOCI 438 is designated as an advanced writing courses, the papers will be graded based both on the content and on how well they are written. Further instructions regarding this assignment will be provided separately. The papers are worth a total of 100 points.

## EXAMS

There will be two essay exams which will test your comprehension of the course material. The first will be administered toward the middle of the semester; the second will be administered during finals week on Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup> at 8 AM. Each exam is worth 75 points.

## GRADING

There are 300 points available:

25 for participation in class discussions

25 for quizzes

75 for Exam #1 (based on Chapters 1 and 2 in Katz and associated class discussions)

75 for Exam #2 (based on Chapters 3-6 in Katz and associated class discussions)

100 total for the papers

A student's grade will be based on the total number of points achieved. Plus/minus grading will not be used in this class. Final grades will be assigned as follows:

270 points or above           A

240 to 269.5 points           B

210 to 239.5 points           C

180 to 209.5 points           D

179.5 points or below        F