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Spring 2-1-2017

### **SOCI 538.01: Seminar in Criminal and Delinquency: Issues in Criminal Law**

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#### **Recommended Citation**

Doyle, Daniel P., "SOCI 538.01: Seminar in Criminal and Delinquency: Issues in Criminal Law" (2017).  
*Syllabi*. 5298.

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# Sociology 538: 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 two 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 two 12 to 15-page papers analyzing the current law regarding a current controversy in the law. Students are required to use the ASA format. With consent of the instructor, students may substitute a research project, public presentation, portfolio, or other project for one of the papers. The papers or presentations 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