

CRIMINAL LAW

CRJU 4213-X20

Online Course

Spring, 2026

Dr. Laura W. Fidelie

laura.fidelie@msutexas.edu

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to examine the development and current state of criminal law in the United States. Material covered will include the distinction between criminal and civil law, punishment of law violators, elements of criminal liability for various crimes, defenses to crimes, and uncompleted crimes. Emphasis will be placed on what constitutes criminal homicide, crimes against people and property, and inchoate crimes. Other topics discussed include crimes against public order and morals, crimes against the state, and international criminal law. Various crimes and their defenses will be taught through use of the Model Penal Code, state and federal statutes, and case law.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, you should have a thorough understanding of what behavior constitutes a violation of the criminal laws of the United States. You should be able to:

- 1) Understand the broad implications of crime, criminal law, and punishment, and the various ways that they relate to certain populations, as well as society at large
- 2) Examine a fact scenario and apply the elements of criminal statutes and case law in order to determine what crime(s) have been committed
- 3) Raise and explore appropriate defense(s) to crime(s) based upon a given fact scenario
- 4) Apply appropriate legal standards to fact scenarios based upon state and federal statutes, the Model Penal Code, and case law
- 5) Present logical, coherent, and well-rounded arguments based upon fact scenarios, both orally and in writing
- 6) Develop rational solutions to criminal law-based fact scenarios, both individually and in teams
- 7) Understand the effects of globalization upon the increasingly international dimensions of criminal law

Required Reading

Mays, L., Ball, J, & Fidelie, L. (2014). Criminal Law: Core Concepts. Wolters Kluwer Law & Business.

Major Assignments/Exams

Course Requirements

1) Discussion Questions:

The discussion questions you respond to each week are a critical and integral portion of the course. This is where I can make the determination, or non-determination, that you are (1) reading, (2) comprehending, (3) applying, and (4) correlating the knowledge you obtain to other aspects of the course and your degree program in general.

For each discussion question asked, I am looking for a detailed and well thought-out answer that integrates the assigned reading, your knowledge, and your own thoughts and perspective on the question posed. Your answers to the discussion questions should consist of your own analysis and synthesis of the course material presented. **No credit** will be given for answers that are either copied from the textbook or another source, or are substantially similar to the textbook or another source. Your answers to discussion questions must utilize correct grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. When referencing outside material, proper APA citations must be given. If you have any questions on what constitutes a quality answer to a discussion question, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Your answers must be posted as text within the D2L text box. Do not post your answers as a document attachment. Each question must be answered separately within the thread started for each question. Do not answer all the questions in one posting. Answers that are posted as document attachments or answered all in one posting **WILL NOT BE GRADED**.

Your own answers to the discussion questions will constitute 75% of your grade for each discussion assignment.

2) Discussion Board Participation:

Every week throughout the semester, discussions will be held via D2L. Discussions are a vital part of the class, as they occur in lieu of live class discussions that would normally take place in a traditional class setting. Thoughtful participation in each of these discussions is mandatory and will be

calculated as a part of your participation grade. Discussions will take place by each student:

- 1) answering each discussion question given for that week AND
- 2) responding to the answer that another student has given to one of that week's discussion questions.

In addition to responding to that week's assigned discussion questions with your own answers, each student must respond to an answer of a fellow student **at least one time per week**. Your response should contain critical comment/analysis of a classmate's response and give support for your analysis. Each response to the answers of fellow students must contain a **minimum of 200 words**. This means that there must be **ONE POST WITH A 200 WORD MINIMUM**. Multiple, shorter posts will **NOT** be combined to reach the 200-word minimum. Instead, the longest post will be graded as your response for word count purposes. For responses that do not meet the word minimum, points will be deducted proportionally. Responses must utilize proper grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. When referencing outside material, proper APA citations must be used.

So if there is a discussion assignment with three (3) questions, you will submit four (4) total postings for that assignment (3 of your own answers, and 1 response to a classmate's posting).

Your response(s) to a fellow student will constitute 25% of your grade for each discussion assignment.

When responding to the answers and thoughts of another student, it is perfectly acceptable to agree or disagree with their answer. However, all responses must be constructive, must not be derogatory in any way, must not use inappropriate language, and must show respect for the thoughts and opinions of your fellow students. If you would not make the comment in a live classroom setting, do not make it on D2L. **Violating these rules of etiquette will result in a loss of all points associated with that response.** If there are any questions about what constitutes an appropriate response, please contact the professor.

3) Examinations:

Three multiple choice exams will be given during the semester. The first exam will cover the material assigned for weeks 1, 2, 3, and 4. The second exam will cover the material assigned for weeks 6, 7, 8, and 9. The third exam will be cumulative, and will also cover the reading for weeks 11, 12, 13 and 14. The purpose of these exams is to assess your knowledge and application of the information presented throughout the readings, class discussions, and assignments.

Exams are to be completed individually by each student. Collaboration with other students is not allowed on exams. Collaboration will be considered an act of academic dishonesty.

Please feel free to contact me about any questions you have regarding course assignments.

Grading Policy

Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
Exam 3	15%
D2L Discussion & Participation	55%
<u>Total 100%</u>	

***Failure to complete any of these assignments will result in an F for the course**

All assignments will be graded on a 100-point scale. Students are expected to submit assignments on the due date and late assignments will **not be accepted**. Unless prior arrangements have been made with the professor, students will receive **no credit** for an assignment submitted past the due date.

Your grades will be determined on the following scale:

90-100	= A
80-89	= B
70-79	= C
60-69	= D
60-below	= F

Recommended Technology

Computer/Laptop/iPad

Contacting Me

I am available to answer any questions you may have about the course. When a question arises, you may contact me at laura.fidelie@msutexas.edu.

ALL COMMUNICATIONS WITH ME **MUST COME FROM YOUR OFFICIAL MSU EMAIL ADDRESS OR THROUGH D2L EMAIL. ANY EMAILS FROM EXTERNAL EMAIL ADDRESSES WILL NOT BE READ OR RESPONDED TO.**

Please note that this course consists of some very challenging material, much of which is taught by means of statutes and case law. As you read and process the course assignments, I encourage you to make a basic outline of each main topic covered. Though it is your responsibility to keep up with the assignments, I am here to help you learn and understand this material. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me if you have questions or are having difficulty with any of the material.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is something that I take very seriously. As future professionals, it is something that you should take seriously as well. Establishing ethical work habits and maintaining both your own integrity and that of your profession begins during your education and training.

Each student is expected to abide by the rules of ethical and academic honesty as defined by the student handbook. All cases of academic dishonesty will result in a **failing grade for the course** and a letter to the Dean of Students requesting that you be **withdrawn from the University**. If there are any questions as to whether an action is academically dishonest, please consult with the professor.

DISCUSSIONS, LECTURE TOPICS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, January 25):

Read Ball, Mays & Fidelie, Chapter 1

D2L Discussion Questions and Response

Submit Biographical Information and Syllabus Agreement (for the syllabus agreement, read the syllabus thoroughly and send me an email stating that you have read the syllabus and agree to abide by its terms throughout the semester)

Week 2 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, February 1):

Read Ball, Mays & Fidelie, Chapter 2

D2L Discussion Questions and Response

Week 3 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, February 8):

Read Ball, Mays & Fidelie, Chapter 3

D2L Discussion Questions and Response

Week 4 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, February 15):

Read Ball, Mays & Fidelie, Chapter 4

D2L Discussion Questions and Response

Week 5 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, February 22):

Complete Exam I (exam will be available from 6:00 AM on Friday, February 20 until 11:59 PM on Sunday, February 22. Extensions will NOT be given).

Week 6 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, March 1)

Read Ball, Mays & Fidelie, Chapter 5

D2L Discussion Questions and Response

Week 7 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, March 8)

Read Ball, Mays & Fidelie, Chapter 6

D2L Discussion Questions and Response

Week 8 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, March 22)

Read Ball, Mays & Fidelie, Chapter 7

D2L Discussion Questions and Response

Week 9 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, March 29)

Read Ball, Mays & Fidelie, Chapter 8

D2L Discussion Questions and Response

Week 10 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, April 5)

Complete Exam II (exam will be available from 6:00 AM on Monday, March 30 until 11:59 PM on Sunday, April 5. Extensions will NOT be given).

Week 11 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, April 12)

Read Ball, Mays & Fidelie, Chapter 9

D2L Discussion Questions and Response

Week 12 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, April 19)

Read Ball, Mays & Fidelie, Chapter 10

D2L Discussion Questions and Response

Week 13 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, April 26)

Read Ball, Mays & Fidelie, Chapters 11 & 12

D2L Discussion Questions and Response

Week 14 (due by 11:59 PM CST, Sunday, May 3)

Complete Exam III (exam will be available from 6:00 AM on Friday, May 1 until 11:59 PM on Sunday, May 3. Extensions will NOT be given).