

Course Outline

COURSE:	LAWS 3306A – Crime, Law, Process & Politics
TERM:	FALL 2026
PREREQUISITES:	LAWS 2301 and LAWS 2302
CLASS:	Day & Time: Please check Carleton Central for the current Class Schedule. Room: Note this is an “in person” section of the course so you must attend the class to have access to the lecture materials (i.e. the lectures are not recorded or posted online).
INSTRUCTOR:	Stephen J. Tasson
CONTACT:	Office: Room D588 Loeb Building Office Hrs: Thursday 1-3pm or by appointment Telephone: None Email: steve.tasson@carleton.ca

CALENDAR COURSE DESCRIPTION

Criminal law process in Canada; structure and use of the process examined for fairness, defects, and possible reform initiatives. Issues concerning gender, race and class bias in the implementation and application of the criminal law.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course critically explores the criminal justice system (CJS) in Canada and the ideological, social and political context of its operations. The course is structured around three organizing themes: (1) the legitimacy of the criminal justice system (2) the organizational structures, roles and impacts of the criminal justice system and (3) the possibilities and limitations of reform of the criminal justice system. Each week is further organized around a series of questions that reflect both longstanding and emerging debates in criminal law and criminological academic literature (see the weekly schedule). For example, how do we think of the CJS as an institution? Where do we locate its limits? While the everyday “deficiencies” of the CCJ are almost universally acknowledged, many attempts at “reform” too often only sharpened outcomes and/or further alienated those that come into contact with the CJS. Is a “reform” framing simply inadequate? Finally, a further important aspect of the course involves centering and exploring the perspectives of “non-system” actors regarding the aims and efficacy of the CCJ (e.g. victims of crime, politicians, the media, and “the public”).

Course Learning Objectives (or, ‘what I want you to get out of the course’)

1. Identify and contrast historical justifications for the operation of the criminal justice system (including its use of coercive violence) in contemporary society
2. Demonstrate an understanding of core debates in the criminal justice system (e.g. the social function of crime, tensions between due process guarantees and expanded participation of effected parties, etc.)

3. Explore and evaluate recent attempts at criminal justice reform in Canada. Contrast these initiatives with the political and public discourses of “public safety” and “crime prevention”
4. Through class discussions and assignments improve your ability to effectively structure and persuasively communicate ideas and arguments in formal writing and orally
5. Explore and evaluate the discriminatory impacts of the CJS on different social groups
6. Demonstrate an understanding of the barriers and challenges to systemic reform initiatives
7. Develop your capacity to reflexively locate yourself and your own structural position within some of the core debates we investigate in the course
8. Contrast competing conceptions of “justice” and “good outcomes” in the context of the CJS
9. Articulate new critical frameworks of, or rationales for, reform within the CJS in Canada

REQUIRED TEXTS

Students are not required to purchase textbooks or other learning materials for this course. All the required course materials (readings, reports, and videos) are **available on the course’s Brightspace page**. There are no materials costs associated with this course.

EVALUATION

(All core components must normally be completed in order to receive a passing grade in this course)

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Department and of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Department and the Dean.

(Note: Any revised DUE DATES on Brightspace supersede the dates listed below)

Course Participation	15%	(continuous, see below)
In-class commentary/response	10%	(September 25 th in-class)
Midterm Exam	20%	(October 16 th in-class)
Interview Assignment (Reform)	30%	
Questions		(November 24 th , brightspace)
Product		(December 1 st , brightspace)
Reflection		(December 11 th , brightspace)
Final Exam (scheduled)	25%	(during Dec.12-23 exam period)

COURSE COMPONENTS

Course Participation (15%)

Despite the fact that this is a large enrollment course, individual weekly participation and “engagement” are still key components of the course and your mark. My aim is that we can have some solid discussions in class. You are expected to **attend and come prepared to participate and contribute to our discussions in class**. Your “course participation” mark is based not only on your basic attendance to these groups, but on the quality of your actual participation in the discussions **and any planned exercises**.

In-class commentary/response (10%)

Active and critical reading are key skills that you should develop/hone as the term progresses. Early in the term we will engage in an in-class writing exercise. Sources will be provided and you will be given time to prepare a short **hand-written** response to the prompts provided. More information will be provided in advance of the class.

Your commentary response should minimally demonstrate that you have:

- a) understood the source material and prompts (summary elements)
- b) evaluated and offered critical analysis of the source in relation to the prompt(s) (analysis elements)
- c) ideally, drawn connections to class discussions, materials or comments (synthesis elements) and
- c) devoted time to carefully crafting your commentary/response e.g. precision in language (care elements)

Unlike a traditional “test” or “quiz”, this type of assignment is not about providing a complete summary or about getting the “right” answer to the prompts. Rather, the main aim is for you to demonstrate your ability to read, synthesize, and creatively engage with course materials and themes through a structured response.

Midterm Exam (20%)

The midterm exam will take place in Week 6 (**OCTOBER 16th**) **during class time**. It will cover lecture content and course materials from **W1-W5**. The midterm exam will consist of multiple choice, short-answer, and long-answer questions (I will provide more precise information in class in the weeks leading up to the exam).

Final Exam (25%)

The final exam will be held during the formally scheduled exam period in December. **It will cover MAINLY substantive content from W7-W12 but there will also be references to material and themes developed in W1-W5.** The exact date, time and location are centrally scheduled by the university (I’m at their whim as much as you!). The exam will likely consist of multiple choice, short answer, and long answer questions (I will inform the class of the precise format after the midterm has been graded)

Interview Assignment (Reform) (30%)

AKA the “Reform Interview assignment” this component is made up of three core parts: (1) An interview “plan”, (2) the podcast/product, and (3) a final reflection. Precise details will be made available on the assignment sheet and will be discussed in class. The overall purpose and aim of the assignment is to provide students an opportunity to further explore core themes of the course including the “gaps” between public and policy perceptions and approaches to the regulation of crime in Canada. In addition, the assignment is an opportunity for students to develop either novel policy initiatives, or novel conceptual or narrative framing tools to engage Criminal Justice reform/transformation in Canada.

Each part of the assignment evaluates different student competencies including: planning, ethical awareness, communication skills and strategies, and structural positioning/reflexivity. There are some allowances for the exact final format, and these are explained in the assignment sheet. Students may also wish to **collaborate on some parts of the assignment**. Again, details are provided on the assignment sheet on Brightspace. You should expect to spend several weeks developing, editing and polishing the final product.

Technical support will also be available through TLS (Teaching and Learning Services) on campus if you're unfamiliar with some of the tools necessary to complete parts of this component.

SCHEDULE

The complete **Required WEEKLY Reading and Lecture Topics schedule** is available on Brightspace (our online portal). If you have any questions or concerns about these topics or readings, please let me know via email. Please also note these other important term dates:

Fall 2026 Sessional Dates and University Closures	
Please find a full list of important academic dates on the calendar website: https://calendar.carleton.ca/academicyear/	
September 9, 2026	Fall term begins.
September 22, 2026	Last day for registration and course changes (including auditing) in fall and fall/winter courses.
September 30, 2026	Last day to withdraw from full fall and fall/winter courses with a full fee adjustment.
October 12, 2026	Statutory holiday. University closed.
October 26-30, 2026	Fall break, no classes.
November 15, 2026	Last day for academic withdrawal from full fall courses.
	Last day to request Formal Examination Accommodations for December full fall, late fall, and fall/winter midterm examinations from the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities. Note that it may not be possible to fulfil accommodation requests received after the specified deadlines
December 11, 2026	Fall term ends.
	Last day of Fall classes.
	Classes follow a Monday schedule.
December 9-10, 2026	No classes or examinations take place
December 12-23, 2026	Final examinations in fall courses and mid-term examinations in fall/winter courses will be held. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

The Department of Law and Legal Studies operates in association with certain policies and procedures. Please review these documents to ensure that your practices meet our Department's expectations:

<https://carleton.ca/law/current-students/>

PLAGIARISM

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as ‘*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*’ This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source (see the Citation Style below).

Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT)
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment
- using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one’s own
- failing to acknowledge sources with proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a **very serious offence** that cannot be resolved directly by the course instructor.

The Associate Dean of the Faculty follows a rigorous [process for academic integrity allegations](#), including reviewing documents and interviewing the student, when an instructor suspects a violation has been committed. Academic Integrity offenses can lead to penalties that are very serious, including a final grade of “F” for the course to academic probation etc. **Recklessly or purposefully engaging in it is incredibly misguided.**

If you are struggling or unsure about how best to use sources in preparing your work in the course, it is far better to contact me and talk to me about resources to help!

CLASSROOM RECORDING

Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is **prohibited**. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact the Instructor and the [Paul Menton Centre](#). Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also strictly prohibited. Under the University’s [Copyright Policy](#), faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as lectures slides, lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials or otherwise circulate these materials without the instructor’s written permission.

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and

Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).

Pregnancy and Family-Status Related Obligation

Please contact me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details about the accommodation policy, visit the [Equity and Inclusive Communities \(EIC\)](#) website

Religious Obligation

Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, [click here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

[The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities](#) (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation.

If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: <https://students.carleton.ca/services/accommodation/>

STATEMENT ON STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>

Emergency Resources ([on and off campus](#))

- Crisis/Urgent Counselling Support: 613-520-6674 (Mon-Fri, 8:30-4:30)
- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1

Carleton Resources

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: call 613-238-3311, text 343-306-5550, or connect online at <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: call 613-722-6914 or toll-free 1-866-996-0991, or connect online at <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Good2Talk: call 1-866-925-5454 or connect online at <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: for online or on-site service <https://walkincounselling.com>

OTHER COURSE SPECIFIC POLICIES

(Please ask if there is any confusion or concern with any course-related policies!)

ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING and SUBMISSION

All written work is submitted through the Brightspace portal unless otherwise directed! **Email is NOT considered an acceptable means of submission.**

All written work submitted for this course must be double-spaced, formatted in 12pt Times New Roman or Arial font with standard margins. Assignments normally must include your name and student number and the course code in the document's header. Title pages, bibliographies and extensive footnotes are not usually counted in determining an assignment's word count or page length (when these are stipulated).

I also note that submitting **substantially the same piece of work** more than once for academic credit is prohibited (i.e. you may NOT normally re-use your own work from a different course/assignment unless you seek and receive written permission in advance).

LATE ASSIGNMENTS & EXTENSIONS POLICY***Why are deadlines so important?***

Meeting deadlines particularly matters in larger courses like this one where I rely on TAs to mark course work.

Teaching Assistants are students like you! They have their own assignments and course/research work to complete – and have their own deadlines (and in a few cases, actual lives to live!). They plan their term schedule around when they have to grade and complete feedback for their students and if your assignments or papers are late this puts additional pressure on them and complicates my ability to maintain consistency in grades across the course.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS will normally be penalized 5% per day when work remains unsubmitted (e.g. a paper marked 68% that was 1 day late would receive a grade of 63%) (unless otherwise specified on the assignment instructions).

Late assignments must be submitted normally through Brightspace unless you are otherwise directed.

*****Extension/ “Academic Consideration” requests*****

There may be instances where, for **legitimate reasons beyond your control**, you are unable to submit work in advance of the deadline and where an extension/consideration is warranted.

Extension/consideration requests must normally be communicated to me a) **in advance of the assignment deadline OR no later than 24hrs after the deadline has passed**. Frantic email requests on the eve of a deadline or a week after are unlikely to receive a favorable reply. For requests for extensions lasting **fewer than 5 days**, please complete the form at the following link **PRIOR** to the assignment due date (be sure to read this form carefully) <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-consideration-coursework-form/>

For more information regarding academic consideration for short-term (again fewer than 5 days) incapacitation (illness, injury, or extraordinary circumstances beyond a student’s control), please visit the following link: <https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline/#academic-consideration-for-short-term-incapacitation>

In extraordinary cases where a **requested extension lasts longer than 5 days** (e.g. in the case of prolonged medical or other serious issues), students will normally be required to provide additional information to justify the extension. **OPEN COMMUNICATION WITH ME REGARDING LATES/EXTENSIONS IS VITAL!**

If you believe my decisions regarding your application for consideration have been unreasonable, you may appeal to the Chair of Law and Legal Studies **within three (3) working days** of my decision. The appeal form is here: <https://carleton.ca/law/application-for-review-of-refusal-to-provide-academic-consideration/>. Note: This form only applies to LAWS courses and is not the same as a formal appeal of grade. More information about academic consideration can be found [here](#).

*****PLEASE ALSO NOTE***:** Late and extended assignments WILL NOT be graded and “returned” along normal timelines, and the quantity of feedback may also be affected.

GENERATIVE “AI” and “CITATION STYLE”

Assignments in the course must be properly referenced and include a bibliography of all sources used in the preparation of the assignment (unless directed otherwise). I understand that, to this point, students have had varying degrees of experience with citation and referencing in their academic work. Regardless, the expectation is that you have a basic ability to reference and cite other’s work used in preparing your own assignments.

The key to “good” citation is **transparency, clarity, and consistency**. Your citations/references should allow your reader to clearly identify the sources you are using and allow them to easily trace these sources, if required.

[Carleton's library offers a number of resources on referencing and citation](#). In this class I prefer that you use an "in-text" citation style (either [APA](#) or [MLA](#)– see the links for the basics) though, the department does allow you to also use [McGill](#) (so this will be accepted). PLEASE INCLUDE PAGE NUMBERS IN YOUR CITATIONS.

As highlighted above, failure to reference properly, using "generative AI" without attribution, or attempting to pass someone else's ideas or work off as your own constitutes plagiarism and may violate the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

***Documenting "Generative AI" use

As "AI" tools become more ubiquitous, students may wish to use these tools in the preparation of marked course work.

In this course students may use such tools, but only in **specific, limited ways**. Such tools can be used to assist with tasks such as proofreading a final draft for spelling, grammar and style.

However, students are **not permitted** to use AI to generate, organize or communicate core ideas or personal reflections (obviously).

The learning goals and focus of the course are on developing original thought and critical thinking skills, so "AI tools" should not be relied upon for creating the main content of any assignment.

Any use of AI must be clearly documented and cited, including the prompts used and how the tool assisted in the process. This **"Statement re AI use" must be added before your bibliography**. (If you don't use these tools to prepare your assignment then you must still declare this). The library has compiled resources related to citing generative AI (see [MacOdrum Library guide](#)).

Any assignment without this basic statement will not be graded.

ASSIGNMENT COPIES & REVIEW

I reserve the right to ask you to submit all assignment preliminary drafts and notes made toward completing your assignments, and I may request you **orally summarize/explain any work submitted for a grade in this class**. Failure to participate in this course-specific review process may have an adverse effect on your assignment grade. You are expected to keep copies of this material until the final course grades are released.

INFORMAL GRADE APPEALS & ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK REQUESTS

There may be instances where you feel an error has been made in assigning a grade to your submitted work in the course or where the reasons for the assigned grade are unclear or confusing. In such instances you may seek further feedback and/or **informally "appeal" the grade**.

Such requests **must first be directed toward the person who initially graded the work** (in some cases this will be a TA). In cases of appeal, you must establish "grounds" for the appeal (i.e. clearly indicate where you think a mistake was made). Vague allusions to "working hard" on an assignment or what you "normally get in other classes" are not sufficient grounds for an appeal.

If after discussing with your TA, the reasons for your grade remain unclear or you would like **additional feedback** on the submission, then you may contact/appeal the mark to me (Steve). Normally I ask students to "stop by"/log on during office hours or create an appt. where we can discuss the work/grade.

If the reasons for the grade remain unclear after this meeting, you may formally appeal your grades as part of a formal **Appeal of Final Grade** (this process is elaborated in the Academic Calendar).