

# SOC 2610 Sociology of Criminal Justice and Corrections

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### Course description

Welcome to the study of the sociology of criminal justice and corrections! The *University of Manitoba Undergraduate Calendar* describes this course as follows:

*The sociological study of the criminal justice system, including the police, the courts, prisons and other correctional agencies. Prerequisite: a grade of "C" or better in SOC 2510 (077.251) or SOC 2511 (077.251) or written consent of department head.*

Sociology SOC 2610 is an introduction to the Canadian criminal justice system. The course follows the accused through various decision stages of the Canadian criminal justice system, from the moment of initial contact with the police to the final sentencing and punishment or treatment of the convicted person. In addition to providing an overview of the major components of the criminal justice system (the police, courts, and corrections), the course is designed to help you develop a critical understanding of the major issues and concerns that are currently being addressed by criminal justice researchers, government policymakers, and people employed in the Canadian criminal justice system.

Students enrolled in this course are required to have completed SOC 2510 (Criminology) at the University of Manitoba or its equivalent at another university. In SOC 2510, you learned how criminologists study and explain

crime. In Sociology 2610, the focus shifts from examining theories of crime and criminal justice policy to learning about the history, structure, and current operation of the Canadian criminal justice system.

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## Course goals

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Define and list the basic components of the criminal justice system.
- Describe the duties and responsibilities of various individuals within the criminal justice system.
- Evaluate societal responses to the criminal justice system and examine the manner in which it has changed over time.
- Analyze the development and operation of the criminal justice system through a critical sociological lens.
- Interpret the criminal justice system as an interdependent social system that is closely tied to, and influenced by, other social and political institutions that exist in Canadian society.
- Identify some of the major issues and problems that criminal justice researchers and policymakers have addressed in recent years in attempting to bring about changes in the manner in which the Canadian criminal justice system operates.

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## Course materials

### Required textbooks

#### Bookstore

The following required materials are available for purchase from the [University Manitoba Bookstore](#). Please order your materials immediately, if you have not already done so. See your [Distance and Online Education Handbook](#) for instructions on how to order your materials.

#### Textbooks

Griffiths, Curt T. 2015. *Canadian Criminal Justice: A Primer*. 5th ed. Toronto: Nelson Canada.

Roberts, Julian V., and Grossman, Michelle G. 2016. *Criminal Justice in Canada: A Reader*. 5th ed. Toronto: Nelson Canada.

The core textbook for the course is Griffiths, *Canadian Criminal Justice: A Primer*. This text provides an introduction to the history, structure, and major current issues affecting the operation of the Canadian criminal justice system. Specifically, the book introduces you to the basic components of the Canadian criminal justice

system (police, courts, and corrections), along with the key findings and conclusions of recent Canadian criminal justice research. The book has several features that make it especially suitable for students taking the sociology of criminal justice and corrections by Distance and Online Education, including:

- Clearly written learning objectives for each chapter with key terms at the start of each chapter.
- A summary paragraph with a key points review and key term questions at the end of each chapter.
- A glossary of key terms related to the Canadian criminal justice system.
- Links to related websites listed at the end of each chapter.
- A companion website ([www.nelson.com/crimjusticeprimer5e.com](http://www.nelson.com/crimjusticeprimer5e.com)) that includes excellent practice questions to help prepare for the true/false and multiple choice based questions on the unit tests and the final exam!

The second required text is the collection of research materials edited by Roberts and Grossman, *Criminal Justice in Canada: A Reader*. This reader has been designed to complement the core textbook by Griffiths. Specifically, it introduces examples of the most significant research studies that have been completed to date on various components of the Canadian criminal justice system, and issues involved in their operation. This book also has several features that make it a good book to use in a Distance and Online Education course, including well-written introductions to each major section of the book.

### Viewing

- **PBS: The Plea (90 minutes)**

This film is available in Real Player in the course site (Unit 8).

Similar to the Canadian criminal justice system, the centerpiece of the America judicial process is the right to a trial by jury. But it may surprise many to learn that nearly 95% of felony convictions never reach a jury in the United States. Instead, these cases are settled through plea bargains in which a defendant agrees to plead guilty in exchange for a reduced sentence. "The Plea" tells several stories – different people with different charges – all with one thing in common: the difficult dilemma of confronting a plea. The program also interviews experts on the criminal justice system. To overworked and understaffed defence lawyers, prosecutors, and judges, plea bargains are the safety valve that keeps cases moving through backlogged courts. Critics, however, contend that the push to resolve cases through plea bargains jeopardizes the constitutional rights of defendants who may be pressured to admit their guilt whether they are guilty or not.

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## Required Hardware and software

### SETTING UP YOUR COMPUTER

#### ADOBE ACROBAT

To view or print a document in PDF format, you need a PDF viewer (Adobe Acrobat). If you have not already done

so, you can download the Adobe Acrobat Reader for free.

**NOTE:** For printing, your printer driver needs to be configured for printing to a PostScript Level 1 printer.

Windows: Select "Level 1" in the PostScript options section of the Acrobat Exchange or Reader print dialog.

Macintosh: In the Chooser, select your printer driver. Then select your printer and click the Setup button. Follow any on-screen dialogs that may appear.

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## Course overview

Even though crime rates in Canada have been steadily decreasing since the early 1990s, prison populations have grown considerably. What accounts for these differences? 'Get-tough on crime' laws, many of which have been enacted in the last decade, have helped fuel the rapid increase in prison populations. Parole boards, fearing civil liability and public outcry, have also become increasingly reluctant to release prisoners, contributing to a further expansion of prison populations. The same scenario transpires with judges who preside over 'bail' hearings.

The above paragraph is an example of one of the many topics to be covered in this course on the criminal justice system, which offers an analysis of crime in Canada and the various 'systems' involved. In this regard, the main goal of the course is to examine the interconnected components of the criminal justice system from police, prosecution, disposition, and release into the community. Put another way, this course follows the accused through various stages of the Canadian criminal justice system – from the moment of initial contact with the police to the final sentencing and punishment (or treatment) of the convicted individual. Special emphasis will be placed on evaluating both the strengths and weaknesses of these components. A combination of legal, empirical, criminological, and sociological material will be used to demonstrate these topic areas.

There will also be a critical sociological component in which we will begin to view the criminal justice system as an interdependent social system, which is closely tied to, and influenced by, other existing social and political institutions that exist in Canadian society. As you will see as you work your way through each unit of the course, controversial issues and changes that arise in the Canadian criminal justice system are often 'caused' by more macro-level social, economic, and political forces operating in Canadian society.

This course is a useful introduction for anyone who is considering a career in the criminal justice system. Various careers in the criminal justice system include: police officers, lawyers, court clerks, paralegals, judges, correction officers, probation officers, parole officers, and custom officers. Whether or not you are considering one of these careers, everyone should have a vested interest in learning more about the workings of the criminal justice system because we all live in communities; and, therefore, we are all affected by crime and criminal behaviour (either directly or indirectly). I am sure we all know someone who has, in some way, been involved in the Canadian criminal justice system.

Since this course is Internet-based, students are required to consult the course web site regularly to keep track of announcements, readings, films, discussion groups, assignments, and unit tests. Even though this is a virtual course, it is important to interact as best you can with the instructor and other students via email and online discussion groups.

## Course content

The course contains 15 units, which are based on 5 modules. Each unit will be accompanied by detailed instructions similar to the kind that a lecturer gives in class.

- Module 1: The Criminal Justice System in Canadian Society
  - Unit 1: An Overview of the Criminal Justice System
  - Unit 2: The Nuts and Bolts of Criminal Justice
  - Unit 3: The Relationship between Crime, Victims, and the Community
- Module 2: The Police in Canadian Society
  - Unit 4: An Overview of the Police
  - Unit 5: Police Powers and Decision Making
  - Unit 6: Police Strategies and Operations
- Module 3: Canadian Courts
  - Unit 7: An Overview of Criminal Courts
  - Unit 8: Prosecution of Criminal Cases
  - Unit 9: Sentencing
- Module 4: Prisons and Re-Entry
  - Unit 10: Alternatives to Confinement
  - Unit 11: Institutional Corrections
  - Unit 12: Release and Re-entry
- Module 5: Challenges in Criminal Justice
  - Unit 13: Miscarriages of Justice
  - Unit 14: Restorative Justice
  - Unit 15: Criminal Justice Reform

You are strongly encouraged to follow the suggested order, since each unit serves as the foundation for the following one.

## Learning activities

Learning activities will primarily be based on readings from the two required textbooks. There will also be several films to be viewed throughout the course in order to provide an alternative learning media. Evaluation, based on the

readings and films, will be assessed through essays, online discussions, unit tests, and a final exam.

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## Evaluation and grading

The following **Marking Scheme** explains how marks will be distributed to calculate the final grade.

Assessment Activities	Subtotal	Total
<b>Essays</b>		15%
Essay 1 - CJS Overview	5%	
Essay 2 - The Prosecution of Criminal Cases	5%	
Essay 3 - Miscarriages of Justice	5%	
<b>Online discussions</b>		10%
Online Discussion 1 – Nuts & Bolts of Criminal Justice and The Relationship between Crime, Victims, and the Community	2%	
Online Discussion 2 – Police Strategies & Operations	3%	
Online Discussion 3 – Sentencing	2%	
Online Discussion 4 – Prisons	3%	
<b>Unit tests</b>		30%
Test 1 – The CJS in Canadian Society	10%	
Test 2 – Policing in Canadian Society	10%	
Test 3 – Canadian Courts	10%	
<b>Final exam</b> –Material from all 14 chapters in Griffiths, with special emphasis on the last 5 chapters.	45%	45%
	100%	100%

## Grading scale

Letter grade	Percentage range	Description

A+	93—100	Exceptional
A	85—92	Excellent
B+	80—84	Very good
B	70—79	Good
C+	66—69	Satisfactory
C	60—65	Adequate
D	50—59	Marginal
F	less than 50	Failure

**Please note: All final grades are subject to departmental review.**

## Assignments

**Important - Missed Assignment:** Any student who misses an assignment must provide a doctor's note (or appropriate equivalent). **This will be strictly enforced.** No student will be allowed to write the assignment, or hand it in late, without a doctor's note (or some form of written documentation). In the case of a late test or exam, any student who does not inform me (by phone/voice mail or email) **prior** to the due date will not be allowed to write a make-up test/exam. This also will be **strictly** enforced.

## Essays

The short essays are worth 5% each and are based on the readings from the Roberts & Grossman textbook. In some cases, the short essays will be based on assigned films as well as the Roberts & Grossman textbook. Each essay will involve writing on specific questions derived from your readings. Each essay will vary in required length. Please see the 'Assignment Information' section for more information. Each of your essays will be graded according to how well it meets the following guidelines:

- Does it answer the question? Make sure that you spend enough time finding out exactly what you are being asked before you begin to write. Begin by stating your thesis: what you intend to demonstrate and your plan for accomplishing this.
- Does it show that you are familiar with and understand the material and/or films? Try to do as much reading and thinking as possible before you start writing, but pursue only a few things in detail in your essay.
- Is it clear and well argued? Avoid unrelated, tangential material, and stay on topic. Be concrete and specific. Remember, one of the goals of a liberal arts education is to teach you how to make concise and convincing arguments.
- Is it supported by relevant citations from scholarly works? This will consist mainly of references from the course texts, but you may also want to refer to other readings.
- Finally, proofread and edit your essay to avoid careless errors of spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Did you use APA format? Note that the Roberts and Grossman textbook contains chapters written by different authors. As such, you need to cite the author of the chapter you are referencing. For more information on how to do this,

please visit the following pages from the Purdue OWL website:

- APA basics: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>
  - Note: for the course assignments, you do not need to include an abstract or a page header (AKA running head)
- In-text citations the basics: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/>
- In-text citations of author(s): <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/03/>
- Reference list the basics: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/>
- Reference list for books (note the section titled "Article or Chapter in an Edited Book"): <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/08/>

## Online discussions

Online discussions are worth either 2% or 3% (OD #1 & #3 are 2% and OD #2 & #4 are 3%) and are based on the readings from the Roberts & Grossman textbook. Similar to the essays, in some cases the online discussions will be based on assigned films as well as the Roberts & Grossman textbook. Full participation in each discussion consists of one posting in response to the discussion question, and at least one substantive response to the posting from another student. The discussion questions are found in the course site under the Communication tab. Please keep postings within 200 to 300 words in length. Answer the question as fully as possible and respond in a meaningful way to one other student's contribution to the discussion, but keep your written contribution focused and to the point. You are required to cite at least one textbook chapter from Roberts & Grossman using APA format.

## Unit tests

Each of the 3 unit tests will be 40 minutes in length and will form 10% of your final grade (for a total of 30%). Tests will be written online and will be comprised of 15 true/false as well as 35 multiple choice questions worth a total of 50 marks. All correct answers will be given 1 mark. Incorrect answers on the true/false questions will be deducted one half mark.

Each test will be written on a designated date (please consult course schedule). Since the test will be administered online, it is up to you when, on the assigned day, you would like to write the test. Remember, however, that as soon as you begin the test, you have 40 minutes to complete it. There is no way to 'pause' the test. Moreover, you will not be able to return to questions once you answer them. As such, be confident of your answer before you proceed to the next question. Finally, all questions will be individually randomized from a larger test bank to discourage cheating.

## Assignment due dates



Consult your [course schedule](#) for the assignment due dates.

## Final examination

The final examination is written online, will be 80 minutes long and will follow the same process as the unit tests (i.e., will consist of a mix of multiple choice questions and true/false questions, will be time limited, and written at a specific time on the specified date). Unlike the unit tests, the final exam will be based on all of the chapters in the Griffith textbook, with an oversample of questions from the last 5 chapters (i.e. Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13 & 14).

Students with legitimate reasons may apply to the Dean of their faculty for an examination deferral. Students without a deferral, and who do not write the final examination, will be given a grade of **F NP**. The proposed date/time for **SOC 2610 Deferred Examination** is TBA.

*A word of caution about the final examination.*

Some students find that they do very well on the assignments (i.e. essays, online discussion, and unit tests), but not as well on the final examination. While your grades on the assignments will give you some idea of how well you are mastering the material, they do not require the breadth of knowledge needed for the final examination, because the latter is based on the entire course. Some students have commented that, based on the high marks they received on the assignments, they were overconfident and underestimated the time and effort needed to prepare for the final examination.

## Extra Practice Material

In addition to the 3 online tests, you will have the opportunity to test your competence regarding your mastery of the material in each unit. Specifically, self-practice quizzes can be found at the textbook's premium website: [www.nelsonbrain.com](http://www.nelsonbrain.com) or through the textbook's regular website: [www.nelson.com/crimjusticeprimer5e.com](http://www.nelson.com/crimjusticeprimer5e.com).

The following is a very important point! The self-practice quizzes are similar to the content that will be found on the relevant online tests and final examination. While these online practice quizzes do not count towards your final grade, I can tell you from many years of experience that students who include the practice material as part of their study preparations do significantly better in the course.

## Plagiarism, cheating, and examination impersonation

You should acquaint yourself with the University's policy on plagiarism, cheating, and examination impersonation as detailed in the General Academic Regulations and Policy section of the University of Manitoba *Undergraduate Calendar*. Note: These policies are also located in your *Distance and Online Education Student Handbook* or you may refer to Student Affairs at <http://www.umanitoba.ca/student>.

## Distance and Online Education (DE) Student Resources

In your course website there are links for the following:

- Contact Distance and Online Education Staff
- Distance and Online Student Handbook
- Distance and Online Education Website

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## Contacting your instructor

For information on contacting your instructor as well as other important information from your instructor see the Instructor Letter link in your course website.

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## Acknowledgements

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<p>Dr. Tracey Peter is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Manitoba, where she has taught since 2004. In addition to SOC 2610, Dr. Peter has taught courses in research methods and statistics, the sociology of law, deviance, and introductory sociology. Dr. Peter's research interests include: mental health and well-being, trauma and violence, gender and sexual minority youth, suicidal behaviour and prevention, social inequality, and political sociology. Dr. Peter has published several articles in these areas as well as three co-authored books on research methods and statistics.</p>	
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Sample