

CCJS 230
CRIMINAL LAW
Spring 2026

Instructor:	Cortney Fisher, JD, PhD (she/her)	Course Time:	Tu/Th 9:30 am – 10:45 am
Office:	2217 Lefrak Hall (CP) Bldg. III – 5101 (SG)	Course Location:	TYD 0117
Zoom:	357 163 5269	Office hours:	SG: Mon 9:30 a – 10:45 am CP: Tue 2:00 pm – 4:30 pm
Email:	cfisher3@umd.edu	Slack:	@cfisher3
TA:	Telia Tchagou		

Communication in this course is to be conducted via Slack. Each student in the course will be invited into a Course Channel. If you do not immediately receive the invitation, it is the student's responsibility to get the invitation from me. Do not email me with questions, concerns, or comments. Slack me! I cannot promise that I will be responsive to email, but I will be responsive to Slack

Course Objective

This course is designed to introduce the student to criminal law in the United States. Students will develop an understanding of where criminal law comes from, the required mindset for criminal activity, and the activity that is criminalized. Students will also be introduced to affirmative defenses to crime. Students will also develop an understanding about how race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and ethnicity impact the way in which actions are defined as illegal.

Learning Outcomes

- (1) Students will understand and explain the origins and structure of criminal law.
- (2) Students will be able to analyze behavioral fact patterns using a lens of criminal law to describe crime and defenses to crimes.
- (3) Students will be able to assess the intersections of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and ethnicity with the structure and application of law.

Content Alert

This course is, by its definition, a course about crime and the people who commit crime. By the nature of this course, we are discussing trauma and traumatic events. It is impossible for me to identify when any particular topic is going to bring up difficult feelings and emotions for any one person in the class. However, I do expect that many people in the class have experienced trauma caused by crime or the criminal justice system and I anticipate that some of the material may be difficult.

Always take care of yourself first. If you need to stop reading a book or an article, put it aside until you feel that you are better able to focus on it and talk to me about it. If you need to talk more at length, I am always available during office hours but University policy requires that I report certain information if certain crimes have happened on campus. There are confidential resources for you to access:

To access mental health services on campus, all services are available through
[**www.mentalhealth.umd.edu**](http://www.mentalhealth.umd.edu).

To access specific services for intimate partner or sexual violence or stalking, contact the UMD CARE Office at 301.314.2222.

If you feel like you are in immediate danger, or going to hurt yourself or someone else, or if you feel like you are having a mental health emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

Notice of Mandatory Reporting

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking: As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible University Employee,” and I must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to UMD’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy on Sexual Harassment and Other Sexual Misconduct.

To view further information on the above, please visit the Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct's website at ocrsm.umd.edu.

Basic Needs Security

If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live, please visit UMD's Division of Student Affairs website for information about resources the campus offers.

Veteran Resources

UMD provides some additional supports to our student veterans. You can access those resources at the office of Veteran Student life and the Counseling Center. Veterans and active duty military personnel with special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill requirements, disabilities) are welcome and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to the instructor.

Required Texts

1. *Criminal Law, 2nd Edition (2025)*
Kathryn Russell – Brown & Angela Davis
ISBN: 9781544375663

Additional materials for the course are uploaded into the ELMS course.

Course Requirements

Students in CCJS 230 will receive 4 grades in this course.

- 15% - Quiz grade
- 30% - Reflection Assignment
- 35% - Final Exam
- 20% - Engagement and Group Exercises Grade

Quizzes 100 points x 1.5 = 150 points

~10 points per quiz x ~10 quizzes = ~100 points

(To calculate your quiz grade, add all your quizzes together. Once you’ve added all your quizzes together, multiply that number by 1.5. If you have more than 10 quizzes and/or more than 10 questions per quiz, it is possible that the number you are multiplying by 1.5 is more than 100. That is ok! You can earn over 100 points on your quizzes if you are offered and take all quizzes available to you and/or you earn more than 10 points per quiz.)

- **Frequency and Format:** There will be at least **10 quizzes** during the semester, each worth approximately **10 points**. Quizzes are conducted on **ELMS Canvas** and will be announced there. They are **open note and open book**. Regular reading and listening to the lectures is highly recommended for success.
- **Non-Collaborative Policy:** Quizzes are individual efforts. **Discussing or sharing quiz questions before the quiz closes is academic dishonesty.** Answers are available immediately after completion but will close two days post-quiz closure, with no reopening.
- **Missed Quizzes:** No excuses are accepted for missed quizzes. However, you may retake a missed quiz for **50% credit within 48 hours** after it closes.
- **First Quiz:** The initial quiz assesses your understanding of the syllabus and acts as a contract between you and me. Completing this **10-point quiz** on ELMS indicates you have read and understood the course requirements. Only take this quiz when you can confirm this understanding, as you will be held to these terms.

Quiz 1 is due to be completed on ELMS by Tuesday, February 10 at 11:59 pm. Students who miss a quiz can take the quiz for 50% credit up to 48 hours after the quiz closes.

****Students can choose to complete 2 Reflection Assignments OR take the Mid-Term Exam on October 16. Students do NOT need to complete both. If you choose to complete the Reflection Assignments, you have to complete two assignments during the semester, but you do NOT need to take the Mid-Term Exam. If you choose to take the Mid-Term Exam, you do NOT need to complete ANY Reflection Assignments.****

OPTION 1: Reflection Assignments: 100 points x 3 = 300 points

50 points per assignment x 2 assignments = 100 points

- **Requirements:** Complete **two reflection assignments** during the semester, each worth **50 points**. Submit assignments directly on **ELMS Canvas** using the Assignment tool; uploads of .doc or.pdf files are not accepted and will not be graded.
- **Submission:** Each module includes a reflection assignment based on a prompt from the professor, such as a media clip, news article, or book excerpt. Materials are provided within the relevant course module. Draft a response as directed by the prompt, inputting assignment directly in the Assignment tool on ELMS Canvas.
- **Content:** Reflections should integrate classroom material and personal insights, focusing on factual analysis rather than opinion. Demonstrate a thorough understanding and reasoning based on class content.
- **Grading Rubric:**
 - **Understanding:** 20% (10 pts)
 - **Fact-based Analysis drawing from reputable, scholarly sources:** 20% (10 pts)
 - **(NOTE:** You are not required to do any external research for the Reflection Assignments, although you are permitted to. The assignments can be completed by relying on your textbook and the class lectures. However, both must be cited.)
 - **Development:** 15% (7.5 pts)
 - **Responsiveness:** 15% (7.5 pts)
 - **Technical Skills:** 15% (7.5 pts)
 - **Citations:** 10% (5 pts)

- **(NOTE:** All sources used for the assignments, including lecture and your text book must be cited. I don't care whether you use APA or MLA citation format, but all sources used for the assignment must be cited.)
- **Honor Pledge:** 5% (2.5 pts)
 - **(Per the Office of Student Conduct:** I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.)
- **Academic Integrity:** Full citations are mandatory; **AI use is prohibited unless explicitly authorized by the prompt.** Non-compliance leads to a 0 score and possible referral for academic dishonesty.
- **Deadlines:** Assignments are due as listed on ELMS – Canvas. All assignments will be due before the next module begins, as per the course schedule. Late submissions receive **50% credit within 48 hours** after the due date.

OPTION 2: Mid-Term Exam 100 points x 3 = 300 points

Students who choose to take the Mid-Term Exam must take the exam on **Thursday, March 12 between 9:00 am and 11:00 am. There are no exceptions.**

The Mid-Term Exam will be available on ELMS-Canvas. It is 50 questions in a multiple choice/true-false/multiple answer format. You will have 1 hour to complete the exam. The exam is open note and open book but is not collaborative. Students will be required to use Lockdown Browser during the exam.

Final Exam 100 points x 3.5 = 350 points

The Final Exam will be open on the date and the time that the University schedules the Final Exam for this class. **Tentatively, that date is Thursday, May 14 from 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm.** The date and time of the Final Exam will not be negotiated under any circumstances.

No final exam will be accepted after this date unless there is a University-approved excuse. Approved excuses include medical emergency or bereavement emergency and are available in the Undergraduate Course Policies.

The Final Exam will be available on ELMS-Canvas. It is 100 questions in a multiple choice/true-false/multiple answer format. You will have 2 hours to complete the exam. The exam is open note and open book but is not collaborative. Students will be required to use Lockdown Browser during the exam.

Engagement 100 points x 2 = 200 points

(To calculate your engagement grade, multiple the score you earned on engagement by 2. Once you have that number, you have the number of total points that you earned for engagement.)

Engagement in the course constitutes 20% of your grade and refers to your relationship as a student to the course. An engaged student is one who fully immerses themselves in and demonstrates enthusiasm for the course, taking proactive actions to deepen their understanding of the material.

Engagement may be demonstrated through consistent and meaningful attendance and participation in class, completion of optional assignments, ongoing discussions with the instructor regarding course content, regular interaction with the Teaching Assistant about the course, timely completion of out-of-class assignments, active involvement in optional discussion questions on ELMS, and other proactive behaviors. Attendance is an important factor in the overall Engagement grade but will not solely determine it. Students will not receive full marks for

merely attending all classes, nor will they receive a zero solely based on several absences. However, it is challenging to engage effectively if you are frequently absent or inattentive during class.

The engagement grade is determined at the discretion of the instructor based on the factors listed below. We strongly recommend bringing a name tag to class and using it throughout each session, as well as stating your name clearly when asking or answering questions.

Engagement Grading Scheme: Each student begins the course with an engagement grade between 70-75, depending on the overall class participation. A highly participatory class sets the baseline at 75, while less engaged classes start at 70.

From the baseline, students can increase their engagement grade by actively participating in class discussions, responding to polls and surveys, bringing court or law-related news to the class, being consistently present and engaged, participating in extra credit opportunities when offered, turning assignments in on time and participating in optional discussions on ELMS. This list is not exhaustive but serves as a guide.

Conversely, the engagement grade can decrease due to poor attendance, disrespectful behavior, use of electronic devices, offensive comments, or lack of participation in assignments. This is also a non-exhaustive list but highlights unacceptable behaviors.

NOTE: Attendance in this class is not mandatory but it is important. Not attending class regularly will impact your Engagement grade because you will miss in-class participation and group work. You do not need to provide an excuse for absences or inform me if you will not be in class. Attendance will be taken at random times throughout the semester by the TA. This attendance does not award points or reduce points. It serves as an objective measure of who is attending the class and engaging with the material. Missing a day when attendance is taken will not change your status as absent, regardless of the reason. The purpose of taking attendance is not to count days but to gauge engagement. Aim to attend class regularly and engage outside of class. Active participation in class may mean that attendance is less relevant in determining the Engagement grade.

Conversely, if you are in class but actively disengaged, it will significantly decrease your Engagement grade.

0-55: Demonstrated very poor engagement and disruptive behavior or frequent absences. Late or missed assignments were common.

60-65: Indicated disengagement either through disruptive behavior, poor attendance, late quizzes, no participation in discussion boards, or no effort to make up work with extra credit.

70-75: Baseline grade reflecting average engagement without additional effort.

80-85: Distinguished oneself through some level of engagement. Acceptable attendance recorded.

90-95: Showed good engagement through active participation, either in class, via email, or additional conversations.

100: Displayed exceptional engagement throughout the course.

Total points **1000 points**

Extra Credit **Points to be added to the END of your point total, as calculated above**

At times during the course of the semester, extra credit opportunities will be offered to students. These will depend on events that are occurring on or near campus. Students are able to earn up to fifty (50) points in extra credit during

the course of the semester. Extra credit can be ad hoc events, as offered during the semester, or case briefs, as described below.

One of those extra credit opportunities will be to complete two case studies. Students will be able to complete up to two (2) case studies for extra credit during the course of the semester. Each case study has a maximum value of 15 points. For the purposes of this class, case studies involve answering the questions immediately following certain cases that are highlighted in the book. If a student wishes to do a case brief for extra credit, the case brief is due on ELMS the day that the readings for that chapter are due in class. Only cases (as described below) in chapters that we are covering for class are eligible for extra credit.

EXAMPLE: If Chapter 5 – Property crime is due for class on Tuesday, March 28, any student who wishes to do so should submit a case brief through ELMS on any case that is highlighted during that chapter no later than 12:00 am on Tuesday, March 28. If the case is highlighted in the chapter is in printed in the *Detailed Contents* of your book in **CAPITAL LETTERS, BOLDED, AND ITALICIZED**. No late case briefs will be accepted, and all dates on the syllabus, as published in the beginning of the semester should be observed.

A+ = 975-1000	B+ = 865-894	C+ = 765-794	D+ = 665-694	F = below 595
A = 935-974	B = 825-864	C = 725-764	D = 625-664	
A- = 895-934	B- = 795-824	C- = 695-724	D- = 595-624	

University Policies

Unless otherwise explicitly stated in this Syllabus, this course confirms with University policy related to Undergraduate Studies. <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

Classroom Behavior and Class Expectations

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. This course explores identity interactions within the criminal justice system, addressing biases, hate speech, and bias-driven incidents. At the University of Maryland and the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, we prioritize inclusivity and belonging. **Disrespectful comments and unverified facts from unreliable sources are prohibited.** Participation requires respectful, evidence-based discussions. In this class, we will:

- Acknowledge that we all have **implicit biases**: Recognize that our biases are shaped by our personal backgrounds.
- Acknowledge that our **biases impact how we view everything around us**: Understand how our biases affect our interactions and professional conduct.
- Understand that **cultural influences** drive how our society responds to biases: Identify racism, sexism, and other biases in societal and systemic structures.
- Recognize that **biases have a daily impact** on us, our peers, and our instructors: Acknowledge how societal biases affect peers and colleagues.
- Be **critical in our analysis** of how we view the world around us: Learn to identify and critically evaluate personal biases.
- **Conduct yourself** as would hope that people conduct themselves around you: Maintain respect, kindness, openness, and compassion.

Non-compliance may lead to referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

Special Guest Speakers. At various times during the semester, there may be special guest speakers who are relevant to the subject that we are discussing. Behavior and attendance during a special guest speaker is extremely important. I will not tolerate inappropriate behavior during a special guest speaker, and I will remove up to 25 points from your Engagement grade for inappropriate behavior. Inappropriate behavior includes texting from your cell phone, chatting or using technology other than that which is appropriate for class use, or talking to other students

while the guest speaker is speaking. Further, attendance at special guest speaker appointments is mandatory. The information provided by the guest speakers will be quizzed and tested heavily.

Use of Personal Technology

The use of personal technology, e.g. personal laptop computers, tablets, SmartPhones, is required for this class to facilitate lectures, assignments, interaction with the professor and TA, quizzes, readings for the course, and exams. Course notes and outlines will often be made available to students prior to each class period. Students are encouraged to download those materials onto a tablet **OR** print the materials for use during class time.

Personal laptop computers and cell phones are prohibited in class.

Recording, copying, or distributing lectures is prohibited for this class. Students that are found to be recording this class for any unauthorized purpose will be referred to appropriate authority for consequences. If a lecture is recorded for any reason, it is considered to be a violation of copyright to copy, distribute, or save any lecture to your personal device or allow any other person to view the recorded material.

Students can use tablets to take notes provided the tablet is laying flat on the student's desk while in the class.

If students are found to be using personal technology devices or using course material in any way that is not specifically related to the day's class discussion, or in a way that is explicitly prohibited, then I may deduct up to 10 points from the student's engagement grade for the first offense and/or ask the student to leave the class. On the second and subsequent offenses, students will be referred to the Departmental Director of Undergraduate Programs and/or the Office of Student Conduct for violating course policy on the use of technology during the course.

Office Hours

Sometimes the material is understood better by talking it through. Students who wish to discuss the material can attend my office hours to ask questions and talk through the material. Coming to my office hours are first-come, first-served. I will speak to each student individually and privately as they enter my physical office in College Park, my physical office in Shady Grove, or my Zoom meeting room. All of my office spaces are listed at the top of this syllabus.

Major Scheduled Grading Events and Prolonged Absences. Major Scheduled Grading Events for this class are your mid-term assessment option and your final exam. Students who miss a Major Scheduled Grading Event due to illness or who have a prolonged absence due to illness (multiple consecutive absences due to the same illness) shall be required to provide his or her instructor with written documentation of the illness from the University Health Center or from his or her own health care provider. The University Health Center or health care provider shall verify dates of treatment and indicate the dates the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities. *A self-signed note from the University Health Center is not an adequate excuse for a major scheduled grading events.*

For this course, quizzes *are not* considered to be Major Scheduled Grading Events. When the student does not meet the quiz time limits or misses a quiz, the student will forfeit the opportunity to take the quiz and will receive a zero.

Because attendance is not mandatory for lectures, there is no need for a student to provide a self-signed note or advanced notification for missing a lecture.

Students with Disabilities:

- **Accommodation:** To receive accommodation, students must be registered with ADS and provide a valid ADS Accommodation form. Unregistered students or those without ADS-reviewed documentation cannot be accommodated.
- **Responsibility:** *Students must arrange a 1:1 meeting to discuss and plan accommodation.* If a student does not have a 1:1 meeting with me to discuss their accommodation, I will not enter nor abide by those accommodations. If you have an accommodation for extended deadlines, you are required to notify me at least 48 hours before the deadline if extensions are needed. Extended deadlines only apply to major graded events. Unclear or unknown issues cannot be addressed.

Lecture Material:

- **Copyright:** Lectures and course materials are protected by copyright law. You may take notes and use materials for personal study but cannot record, reproduce, or distribute them commercially without written consent.
- **Violations:** Selling or distributing materials may violate the University Code of Student Conduct, Part 9 (k).

You play stupid games, You win stupid prizes¹, aka Academic Integrity

For this course, your written assignments will be collected via Turnitin on our course ELMS page. I have chosen to use this tool because it can help you improve your scholarly writing and help me verify the integrity of student work. For information about Turnitin, how it works, and the feedback reports you may have access to, visit [Turnitin Originality Checker for Students](#)

The University's Code of Academic Integrity is designed to ensure that the principles of academic honesty and integrity are upheld. In accordance with this code, the University of Maryland does not tolerate academic dishonesty. Please ensure that you fully understand this code and its implications because all acts of academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of this code. All students are expected to adhere to this Code. It is your responsibility to read it and know what it says, so you can start your professional life on the right path. **As future professionals, your commitment to high ethical standards and honesty begins with your time at the University of Maryland.**

It is important to note that course assistance websites, such as CourseHero, or AI generated content are not permitted sources unless explicitly authorized by the assignment instructions. Material taken or copied from these sites can be deemed unauthorized material and a violation of academic integrity. These sites offer information that might be inaccurate or biased and most importantly, relying on restricted sources will hamper your learning process, particularly the critical thinking steps necessary for college-level assignments.

Additionally, students may naturally choose to use online forums for course-wide discussions (e.g., Group lists or chats) to discuss concepts in the course. **However, collaboration on graded assignments is strictly prohibited. And, the information that is circulated through these informal chats is often erroneous.** Examples of prohibited collaboration include asking classmates for answers on quizzes or exams, asking for access codes to clicker polls, etc. Please visit the [Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies](#) and reach out if you have questions.

Finally, on each exam or assignment you must write out and sign the following pledge: ***I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment.*** If you ever feel pressured to comply with someone else's academic integrity violation, please reach out to me straight away. Also, ***if you are ever unclear*** about acceptable levels of collaboration, ***please ask!*** To help you avoid unintentional violations, ***the following table*** lists levels of collaboration that are acceptable for each graded exercise. Each assignment will contain more specific information regarding acceptable levels of collaboration.

¹ Swift, T. (2019). Miss Americana & the Heartbreak Prince. On *Lover*. Republic Records.

	 OPEN NOTES	 USE BOOK	 LEARN ONLINE	 GATHER CONTENT With AI	 ASK FRIENDS	 WORK IN GROUPS
Quizzes	✓	✓	---	---	---	---
Reflection Assignments	✓	✓	✓	✓*	---	---
Mid-Term and Final Exam	✓**	✓	---	---	---	---

*Unless permitted explicitly by the directions of the assignment

**Lockdown Browser is required for this assignment. Any notes used for this assignment must be in paper format.

To reiterate, the prohibition on academic dishonesty extends to the use of any and all tools that use artificial intelligence to generate material unless the directions of the assignment explicitly permit the use of generative artificial intelligence. It also extends to using another's work without proper citation or "collaborating" on assignments that aren't intended for collaboration. We will use the Turnitin score on your written assignments, as well as other methods of detecting whether your material has been significantly "borrowed" from another source. Students who are found to be in violation of this classroom policy **OR** any other UMD campus policy regarding academic integrity will:

- Receive a 0 for the assignment; and
- Be referred to the Student Honor Council and the Office of Judicial Programs

CCJS 230: Criminal Law, Spring 2026		
Class Date	Topic	Readings Due
Tuesday, January 27	Course Introduction	Syllabus and Course Schedule <i>US Constitution , US Bill of Rights</i> (Amendments 1-10), <i>13th and 14th Amendments to US Constitution</i> ; <i>Criminal Law, Chapter 1</i>
Thursday, January 29	Introduction to US Constitution; Introduction to Criminal Law	EC case briefs for Constitutional Limits on Criminal Law due
Tuesday, February 3	Introduction to Criminal Law	EC case briefs for Constitutional Limits on Criminal Law due
Thursday, February 5	Introduction to Criminal Law; Constitutional Limits on Criminal Law	<i>Criminal Law, Chapter 2</i>
Tuesday, February 10	Constitutional Limits on Criminal Law	QUIZ 1 DUE NO LATER THAN 11:59 PM
Thursday, February 12	Constitutional Limits on Criminal Law	EC case briefs for Elements of a Crime due
Tuesday, February 17	Constitutional Limits on Criminal Law; Elements of a Crime	<i>Criminal Law, Chapter 3</i>
Thursday, February 19	Elements of a Crime	
Tuesday, February 24	Elements of a Crime	
Thursday, February 26	Complicity Liability	No readings, case briefs, or reflection assignments for Complicity Liability
Tuesday, March 3	Inchoate Crimes	<i>Criminal Law, Chapter 4</i>
Thursday, March 5	Inchoate Crimes	EC case briefs for Inchoate Crimes Due
Tuesday, March 10	Catch Up	
Thursday, March 12	MID-TERM EXAM (only if chose no reflection assignments)	
Tuesday, March 17	SPRING BREAK	
Thursday, March 19	SPRING BREAK	
Tuesday, March 24	Property Crimes	<i>Criminal Law, Chapter 5</i> ; EC case briefs for Property Crimes due
Thursday, March 26	Property Crimes	EC case briefs for Violent Crimes due
Tuesday, March 31	Property Crimes; Violent Crimes	<i>Criminal Law, Chapter 7</i>
Thursday, April 2	Violent Crimes	
Tuesday, April 7	Violent Crimes	EC case briefs for Homicide due
Thursday, April 9	Violent Crimes; Homicide	<i>Criminal Law, Chapter 8</i>
Tuesday, April 14	Homicide	
Thursday, April 16	Homicide	EC case briefs for Justification Defenses due
Tuesday, April 21	Justification Defenses	<i>Criminal Law, Chapter 9</i>
Thursday, April 23	Justification Defenses	
Tuesday, April 28	Justification Defenses	EC case briefs for Excuse Defenses due
Thursday, April 30	Excuse Defenses	<i>Criminal Law, Chapter 10</i>
Tuesday, May 5	Excuse Defenses	
Thursday, May 7	Catch Up	
(TEN) Thursday, May 14	TENTATIVE: Final Exam (1:30 pm - 3:30 pm)	