

CRIJ-1310.001, Fundamentals of Criminal Law  
Fall 2026 Semester

## INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

- **Instructor:** Michael Ferguson
- **UTT email:** [mferguson@uttyler.edu](mailto:mferguson@uttyler.edu)
- **Office telephone:** 903.730.3927
- **Office location:** CAS 134
- **Office hours:** MWF 9:05a - 10:00 and 11:15a - Noon; T/Th 9:30a - 10:50a. For those who wish to meet via Zoom rather than F2F, click this [Zoom office hours link](#). I will be logged into Zoom during my office hours, so there's no need to arrange an appointment beforehand on those days.

## COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION

This course serves as an introductory examination of criminal law from a fundamental perspective. While Texas Criminal Law will be partially covered, this course examines the foundations of criminal law as they have evolved from British common law through the development of codified law within American society. Students will be exposed to criminal code, case law and the development of legal arguments from a criminal defense perspective. This course serves as a prerequisite to CRIJ 3326, Advanced Criminal Law.

## COURSE RATIONALE

This course provides you with an overview of substantive criminal law in the United States. Students will learn the "who, what, when, where, why, and how" of American criminal law. This course will give you the basic information you need to understand the complexities of our criminal law and why it is the way it is today. This course will include a mixture of basic legal theories and Texas criminal law.

## COURSE TIME AND LOCATION

- August 24, 2026 - December 12, 2026
- Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
- 10:10a - 11:05a
- COB 212

## STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. *Identify* the elements of crimes and defenses under Texas statutes, Model Penal Code, and case law.
2. *Classify* offenses and articulate penalties for various crimes.
3. *Compare* culpable mental states when assigning criminal responsibility.
4. *Assess* the impact of history and philosophy on current criminal laws.
5. *Evaluate* the application of criminal law to other areas of criminal justice such as law enforcement and corrections.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

1. None - all materials will be provided

## RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOK

1. APA. (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. ISBN: 978-1-4338-3217-8

## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Students must have access to a computer or tablet with internet access to use UT-Tyler's Canvas LMS. Assignments and quizzes will be handled through Canvas. Additionally, students must have access to, and use of, a word processor (e.g., MS Word or Apple Pages) and presentation software (e.g., MS PowerPoint or Apple Keynote). Lastly, students must have access to a mind-mapping application. Work uploaded to Canvas must be in one of the following file formats:

- Documents: .docx, .doc, .pages, or .pdf (.pdf is the preferred format)
- Presentations / graphs: .docx, .doc, .pptx, .ppt, .key, or .pdf (.pdf is the preferred format)

## ATTENDANCE

You can't learn if you're not in class. You must participate in the class to earn credit. I understand that life happens, but you need to be in class to learn the material we're covering. I will take attendance each class session. Your attendance grade counts as a major exam grade!

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

It is the student's responsibility to keep track of due dates. Please note that quizzes, assignments, and tests will be available for several days, so missing a due date for any given quizzes, assignments, or tests will translate into a score of zero. There will be no extra credit or extensions to complete any missed quizzes, assignments, or tests.

1. **Anti-Plagiarism Certificate:** You must complete the free, online [anti-plagiarism course](#) indicated under the Syllabus Module. Upon completion of the two required modules, you must upload a copy of your completion certificate to Canvas. **This certificate is worth 5% of your grade and is required for successful completion of the course.**
2. **Quizzes:** Reading the assigned chapters puts concepts into action. To help with retention and comprehension of the material, you will complete short quizzes each week. Quizzes will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions. **Quizzes are worth 50% of your grade.**

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3. **Assignments:** You will, from time to time, be required to complete various assignments that will help you to master the content we've covered. **Assignments are worth 25% of your grade.**
4. **Final Exam:** The final will consist of true/false and multiple-choice questions taken from the material covered during the semester. Your attendance grade counts as a major exam grade. **Your exam/attendance average is worth 20% of your grade.**

### CENSUS DATE

The census date for this summer class is **09/08/2026**. Drops/withdrawals after Census Date and before the Last Day to Withdraw will result in a grade of W. Courses dropped prior to Census Date will not appear on the student's record or the transcript.

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE POLICY

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

The work submitted by students in this course will be generated by themselves. This includes all process work, drafts, brainstorming artifacts, editing, and final products. This extends to group assignments where students must collaboratively create the project. Any instance of the following constitutes a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code: a student has another person/entity do any portion of a graded assignment, which includes purchasing work from a company, hiring a person or company to complete an assignment or exam, using a previously submitted assignment and/or using AI tools (such as ChatGPT).

### STUDENT RESOURCES AND UT-TYLER POLICIES

- [Student Resources](#)
- [University Policies and Information](#)

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**COURSE SCHEDULE**

- **WEEK 1 (08/24 - 08/28)**
  - Welcome to class, review syllabus, course overview
  - Chapter One: Introduction to Criminal Law
    - 1.1: Introduction
    - 1.2: Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure
    - 1.3: The Difference between Civil and Criminal Law
    - 1.4: Classification of Crimes
  - Week One Quiz
  - Anti-Plagiarism Certificate
- **WEEK 2 (08/31 - 09/04)**
  - Chapter Two: The Legal System in the United States
    - 2.0: Prelude to The Legal System in the United States
    - 2.1: Federalism
    - 2.2: The Branches of Government
    - 2.3: The Court System
    - 2.4: The Burden of Proof
  - Week Two Quiz
- **WEEK 3 (09/07 - 09/11)**
  - NOTE: Monday, 09/07/2026, is Labor Day holiday: all offices closed; no classes held.
  - Chapter One: Introduction to Criminal Law (Continued from Week One)
    - 1.5: The Purposes of Punishment
    - 1.6: Sources of Law
  - Week Three Quiz
- **WEEK 4 (09/14 - 09/18)**
  - Chapter Three: Constitutional Protections
    - 3.1: Applicability of the Constitution
    - 3.2: The Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses
    - 3.3: Freedom of Speech
    - 3.4: The Right to Privacy
    - 3.5: The Right to Bear Arms
    - 3.6: Excessive Punishment
  - Week Four Quiz
- **WEEK 5 (09/21 - 09/25)**
  - Chapter Four: The Elements of a Crime
    - 4.1: Criminal Elements
    - 4.2: Criminal Intent
    - 4.3: Causation and Harm
  - Week Five Quiz
  - Assignment: Mindmap of Texas' DWI Statute (PC Section 49.04)

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- **WEEK 6 (09/28 - 10/02)**
  - Chapter Five: Criminal Defenses, Part 1
    - 5.1: Criminal Defenses
    - 5.2: Self-Defense
    - 5.3: Other Use-of-Force Defenses
    - 5.4: Defenses Based on Choice
    - 5.5: Consent
  - Week Six Quiz
- **WEEK 7 (10/05 - 10/09)**
  - Chapter Six: Criminal Defenses, Part 2
    - 6.1: The Insanity Defense
    - 6.2: Infancy, Intoxication, Ignorance, and Mistake
    - 6.3: Entrapment
  - Week Seven Quiz
  - FIVE-POINT EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY: ATTEND [NATIONAL NIGHT OUT BLOCK PARTY](#) (the first Tuesday in October)
- **WEEK 8 (10/12 - 10/16)**
  - Chapter Seven: Parties to Crime
    - 7.1: Parties to Crime
    - 7.2: Vicarious Liability
    - 7.3: Accessory
  - Week Eight Quiz
- **WEEK 09 (10/19 - 10/23)**
  - Chapter Eight: Inchoate Offenses
    - 8.1: Attempt
    - 8.2: Conspiracy
    - 8.3: Solicitation
  - Week Nine Quiz
- **WEEK 10 (10/26 - 10/30)**
  - Chapter Nine: Criminal Homicide
    - 9.1: Homicide
    - 9.2: Murder
    - 9.3: First-Degree Murder
    - 9.4: Felony Murder
    - 9.5: Second-Degree Murder
    - 9.6: Manslaughter
  - Week 10 Quiz

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- **WEEK 11 (11/02 - 11/06)**
  - Chapter 10: Sex Offenses and Crimes Involving Force, Fear, and Physical Restraint
    - 10.1: Sex Offenses
    - 10.2: Assault and Battery
    - 10.3: Domestic Violence and Stalking
    - 10.4: Kidnapping and False Imprisonment
  - Week 11 Quiz
- **WEEK 12 (11/09 - 11/13)**
  - Chapter 11: Crimes against Property
    - 11.1: Nonviolent Theft Crimes
    - 11.2: Extortion, Robbery, and Receiving Stolen Property
    - 11.3: Crimes That Invade or Damage Property
  - Week 12 Quiz
- **WEEK 13 (11/16 - 11/20)**
  - Chapter 12: Crimes against the Public
    - 12.1: Quality-of-Life Crimes
    - 12.2: Crimes Targeting Group Conduct
    - 12.3: Vice Crimes
  - Week 13 Quiz
- **THANKSGIVING (11/23 - 11/27)**
  - Campus closed - no classes
- **WEEK 14 (11/30 - 12/04)**
  - Chapter 13: Crimes against the Government
    - 13.1: Crimes Involving National Security
    - 13.2: Crimes Involving Terrorism
    - 13.3: Perjury, Bribery, and Obstruction of Justice
  - Week 14 Quiz
- **WEEK 15 (12/07 - 12/11)**
  - Comprehensive Final Exam

**Note: this schedule is subject to change. I will notify you if I make any alterations.**