

**CRIMINAL LAW 106-002**  
Spring 2008  
Visiting Professor Alyse Graham  
Mon/Wed 10:00 – 11:15 a.m.  
Hazel Hall Room 120

Introduction

Criminal law is a first year, introductory course covering basic, substantive criminal law. We will examine the nature, sources, and limits of criminal law, from theoretical underpinnings to modern day statutes defining criminal conduct. We will consider the problem of statutory interpretation in the criminal law context and will explore the basic elements of certain crimes as well as various common law defenses. The concepts and doctrines we will discuss include mens rea, actus reus, causation, homicide, rape, conspiracy, justification and excuse. We will consider inchoate crimes and the law of attempts, as well as surveying the basic common law crimes. Criminal law is an intriguing subject that allows us to examine what types of conduct society chooses to label as “criminal” and the details and consequences of conduct defined as criminal. I hope you will enjoy the course.

Casebook

Joshua Dressler, Cases and Materials on Criminal Law 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (Thomson West, 2007).

Although it is not required, Understanding Criminal Law by Joshua Dressler, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (LexisNexis 2006) may be a helpful resource during the course. It will be available in the library on reserve, and you may be able to purchase it through the bookstore.

Grading

Grades in the class will be based on a final exam and on class participation (valuing quality over quantity). The majority of your grade will derive from your performance on the final exam. Class participation, including attendance, may adjust your grade up or down. For the exam, any topic assigned for reading, whether commented upon in class or not, is fair game, as is any issue discussed in class even if not contained within the reading.

### Attendance and Participation

I expect you to attend class regularly and to be prepared to participate. I also realize that sometimes you cannot. If you fail to attend class with some frequency and without sufficient explanation, you may be precluded from taking the final exam.

### Contact Information

If you need to contact me, please email me at [grahamstretch@starpower.net](mailto:grahamstretch@starpower.net). **I do not use a GMU email address or TWEN.**

### Assignments:

The following reading assignments should be completed in preparation for the class date listed next to it. With the exception of some supplemental materials that may be assigned and made available through the copy center, all reading assignments are from the Dressler casebook. Depending on the pace of class discussion, reading assignments may be modified as we go along. The remaining reading assignments for the semester will be provided once the course is underway.

1/07 The Concept of Wrongdoing 1-28  
(esp. Owens, Ragland and related sections)

1/09 Principles of Punishment 29 - 59

1/14 The Principle of Legality and Statutory Interpretation 88 – 109, 116 - 125

1/16 Actus Reus 126 - 146

1/21 NO CLASS – MLK DAY