

**The University of Western Ontario  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
SOCIOLOGY 3312A-001: WRONGFULLY CONVICTED  
Fall 2018**

Professor: Kim Ashby  
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Class Times: Tuesday 1:30 – 4:30pm  
Class Room: 3006 SSC  
Office Hours: Mondays 11:30 – 12:30pm. or by appointment.  
TA:  
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Web Site: <https://owl.uwo.ca/>



Some Canadian wrongful conviction victims: Donald Marshall Jr., James Driskell, David Milgaard, William Mullins-Johnson,  
Steven Truscott, Kyle Unger

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The course will critically explore the phenomenon of wrongful convictions with an emphasis on systemic bias and the intersection of race, gender, class, age, and mental disability; the causes of wrongful convictions – eyewitness testimony, informants, expert testimony; forensic evidence; tunnel vision, interrogation techniques; and the biases of the police, the prosecution, and the judiciary, as well as, ineffective defense counsel.

**Prerequisite for the course:** Enrollment in third year or fourth year of Honours Specialization or Majors in Sociology. Unless you have either the requisites or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

The following books are required and available at the University Bookstore.

- *Manufacturing Guilt* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), 2009, Anderson & Anderson, Fernwood Press,  
**MG**
- *When Justice Is a Game*, 2009, Maidment, Fernwood Press,  
**JG**

Note: In addition, further required readings have been uploaded to **Readings** on the class' OWL homepage.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

The successful student will be able to:

1. Think critically about the way in which the criminal justice system perpetuates wrongful convictions.
2. Understand the etiology of systemic bias through examining the impact of factors associated with the wrongful convictions of those who are marginalized in this country.
3. Make an argument about the relevance of racial or gender or class bias on the wrongful conviction phenomenon in a particular case.
4. Identify what remedies are available once a finding of systemic bias has been made.
5. Identify and propose areas of reform to address the fallibility of the criminal justice system.

## METHOD OF EVALUATION

Participation - Weekly Wiki	20%
Group Lecture Project	20%
Video Project or Essay (Nov. 27)	30%
Exam	30%

## COURSE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:

With the exception of legitimate medical/personal excuses (documentation required to be submitted) students are expected to attend at least **80%** of the class meetings for this course. A passing grade in the course cannot be obtained without meeting this attendance requirement. This class will be a community of learners, so everyone must be present to learn and to help others learn. Punctual and regular attendance at classes is expected.

## Class Structure:

This class may be different from any other class in which you as students have participated. There are 40 students in the class – students in the first week, will choose to be part of a team of four (4). This team will work together in the “Group Lecture Project” (one lecture), and each member of the team will send me two multiple choice questions from the readings and films that they cover in their designated group lecture.

Throughout the course, we (students & and professor) are going to become a class of collaborators working together to develop a “Wiki Master Notebook” about the Wrongfully Convicted, from which all participants can study. This Master Wiki notebook will be the basis of the final exam. On a weekly basis, a group of four will review, copy and paste the ideas, concepts, legal terms and theories to which all students will contribute during class discussions, in the ‘Comments’ section of the Wiki. Laptops will be required.

### **Participation:**

This is worth 20% of your final grade in this course. Attendance is **compulsory** for each class, and if it is not your group’s turn to lead a class discussion, you are still essential in the creation and development of the materials in our “Wiki Master Notebook”. Wiki credits all input such that participation can be tracked. Failure to attend will result in a **substantially reduced** grade.

### **Plagiarism**

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

### **Plagiarism Checking**

All reaction papers will be uploaded to Turnitin.com on the class web site. These papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

### **Policy on Laptops in Class**

The use of laptops is permitted in class as authorized by Professor Ashby in developing the ‘Master Class Wiki Notes’.

### **Exam**

The exam will be composed of multiple-choice questions. It will be held in the December exam schedule and will be 2 hours long.

### **Scantron Exams**

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams will be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

## **Missed Exam and Late Assignments**

You should understand that academic accommodation will not be granted automatically on request. If, due to medical illness, you cannot write a test, or submit an assignment by the due date, it is your responsibility to follow the University's **new** "Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness". This policy can be accessed at:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

## **Grades and Grading**

Grades (except the final year-end mark) will be posted to the OWL site as they become available.

## **Grade Distributions**

The Department of Sociology at the University of Western Ontario has adopted grade distribution guidelines which all instructors are required to follow. For Sociology courses at the 3100 and 3200 level:

- "A"s are not to exceed "B"s and
- Means must be in the range of 70-75%

## **Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness**

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation:

[http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical\\_accommodation.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html)

## **Accessibility Options:**

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

## **Scholastic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

## **Mental Health**

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western ([http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/index.html](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html)) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

## **Policy on Make-Up Exams**

The exam date is firm and will not be changed. A make-up exam will be offered only in the most compelling of circumstances, such as serious illness or a death in the family. Be advised that if you miss the exam you run a serious risk of getting a zero on that component of your grade. To be considered for a make-up, you must:

- Notify Professor Ashby of your circumstances BEFORE the scheduled exam and
- Obtain clear documentation of your illness and file that documentation with the Academic Counseling office of your faculty.

Once these things have been done, and once Ashby has been notified by your Academic Counseling office that the documentation has been examined and found to be legitimate, then a date for a make-up will be set. Sociology department policy is that all make-ups will be scheduled for a Friday, and a failure to take the make-up at the assigned date and time will result in a zero being earned.

## **Email**

Every student has been assigned a UWO email address by the Registrar's office. If you have not as yet activated that account, you should do so immediately. The ITS desk in the Western Service building can help you with questions about your account.

Every so often Professor Ashby will be sending out mass emails to the class and you are responsible for any information (about exams, your grade, missed assignments, etc.) in those emails. This means that you are expected to check your UWO account at least three times a week. If you have your UWO mail forwarded to another account (Hotmail, Yahoo, etc.), it is your responsibility to insure that messages do not bounce back because your disk quota is full.

If you have any questions about the course, the quickest way to have them answered is to contact Professor Ashby via email. If at all possible, each message will be answered within 2 working days. Please check this syllabus or the course homepage on WebCT before writing to see if the information you want is posted there.

Because an active UWO email account is needed to access OWL, and because the use of OWL is an important part of this course, **only** questions sent using your UWO account will receive an answer.

## **HOW TO CONTACT ME**

Please feel free to come by during my office hours to discuss any questions you have regarding the course or simply to chat about some issue raised in class. If you e-mail me, I will reply to you within 24-48 hours, only if you use your UWO account and insert "**Soc 3312**" into the subject line. However, I do not read e-mails on the weekends.