



The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 3312A 001

Wrongfully Convicted

Fall 2022

Tuesdays – 9:30am – 12:30pm, UCC 63

In-person

Instructor: Kim Ashby

Office Hours: By appointment

Department of Sociology, Office: SSC # 5417

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Course Description:

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

Prerequisite(s): Registration in third or above. Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The 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.

Anti-requisite(s): None

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

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.

Course Material:

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

- *Manufacturing Guilt* (2nd 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's OWL homepage.

In class, students will require a computer. If the class is forced to on-line due to a Covid resurgence, students will require a stable internet connection and computer with a working microphone and webcam.

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<http://owl.uwo.ca>) on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

Please book an appointment to come to my office or to have a Zoom meeting 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 if you use your UWO account and insert "Soc 3312" in the subject line. However, I do not read e-mails on the weekends.

Method of Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

Participation - Weekly Wiki	20%
Group Lecture Project	30%
Video Project	25%
Exam	25%

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning:

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, synchronously (i.e., at the time indicated in the timetable). The grading scheme will **not** change and students will have the option specified below for Wiki participation.

Class Structure/ Participation and Expectations:

This class may be different from any other class in which you as students have participated. There are 40 students in the class and in the first week, students will choose to be part of a team of four (4).

Group Lecture: (30%)

This team will work together in the “Group Lecture Project” (one lecture), which they will send me by 9am the morning of the lecture. Each member of the team will also send me two multiple choice questions from the readings and films that they cover in their designated group lecture, **before** they give the lecture at **9am**. Each group member will earn a mark based on their group’s presentation and the quality of their individual multiple choice questions which will be worth 2 marks each (total: **4%**) of the 30%.

The questions submitted via email to me must follow the following format.

All studies of consumption of pornography show that men who are regularly exposed to porn exhibit which of the following traits?

- a. aggressive behaviour
- b. desensitization to sexual aggression
- c. beliefs supporting or minimizing violence against women
- d. a demand for more extreme arousal materials
- e. all of the above*

Failure to replicate the above format will result in an automatic “0”. Note: there must be 5 options and the answer in your question must be designated by a star “*”. Duplication, copying or replication of other students’ questions will result in a “0”. Late submissions will not be accepted.

On a weekly basis, the facilitator group of four will review, copy and paste the ideas, concepts, legal terms and theories to which all students have contributed in the ‘Comments’ section of the Wiki, to the appropriate ‘headings’ in the week’s Wiki, by **noon of the Thursday**, following the class. Laptops will be required.

Class Wiki Participation: (20%)

Throughout the course, students will be working 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.

This Wiki work is worth 20% of a student’s 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 input to the Wiki will result in a substantially reduced grade. To earn Wiki participation marks (20%), students must thoughtfully participate with **three (3)** contributions to the ‘Comment’ section of the Wiki, during class, each week.

Alternative Weekly Wiki Option: If a student is absent for any reason and unable to participate in the Comments section of the Wiki during class, they will have until the **Wednesday after class, at 5pm**, to upload to the Wiki Comments or to write a 2-page synopsis of one of the week's readings to be handed in (uploaded to the designated OWL assignment folder) by the **following Friday at noon**. All work will be checked by Turnitin.

Note: Failure to edit for grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, tense alignment, noun/verb agreement will result in a *significant loss of marks, in all assignments.*

Exoneree Video Project: (25%)

Students will create a documentary about an "Exoneree" of their choice. The purpose of the **15** minute video is to identify and analyze the various factor(s) that contributed to the wrongful conviction. A list is provided below, but this is only a guide as some of these factors may or may not apply to the case that you are examining in your video.

"Exonerees" cannot be one from the Andersons' text.

In the video, credits must be listed at the end of the documentary.

Some factors students should consider when developing their video, include the following:

Target practices of the police

Suppression/falsification of evidence

Falsified forensic evidence

Judicial malpractice

Police bullying/intimidation of witnesses

Police tactics- e.g. Mr. Big

Prosecution and defense misconduct

Judicial error or misapplication of the law

Media bias or prejudice in reporting

Eyewitness Testimony

The significance of being granted/not being granted bail

Financial status of the accused

Confessions obtained in the absence of a lawyer

The role of plea-bargaining

Community pressure for a conviction

Age of the victim

Possession of a criminal record

Race

Note: This is not an exhaustive list so please do not hesitate to include any other factor(s) that come to your attention with respect to the wrongful conviction case that you are using as the basis of your video.

Note: Please note that it takes time to upload a video to YouTube - **do not leave it to the last few hours!**

A rubric will be used to assess the video and will be posted. Please note that the link to your video is due to be uploaded to the Assignment folder on **Tuesday, December 6th by 5pm**. Late videos submitted after 5pm (**5:01**) of the due date without adequate academic documentation will be subject to a **5%** immediately and 5% every day thereafter.

Exam (25%)

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.

Student Absences:

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

Assessments worth less than 10% of the overall course grade:

For work worth less than 10% of the total course grade, the instructor is empowered to grant academic considerations without referring the student to their academic counsellors. I have specified in the evaluation components above an alternative to missed Wiki participation work to ensure fair treatment for all students.

Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade:

For work totaling 10% or more of the final course grade, students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible. Upon Academic authorization, an extension will be negotiated with a student.

Absences from Final Examinations:

Students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible. Academic Counselling will determine eligibility to write a Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

Note: Missed work can *only* be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is **not** sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty of Social Science Academic Counselling Office.

Important Policies

Academic Consideration for Missed Work: Students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation in order to receive accommodation for missed work worth 10% or more of the final grade in the course. All required documentation for absences must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty. Individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds or for other reasons.

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf. The student medical certificate is available at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Religious Accommodation: When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at <https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

Accessibility Options: Students with disabilities or accessibility challenges should work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html), which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing.

The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website: www.registrar.uwo.ca/academics/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: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

A Note on Plagiarism: Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea 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 scholastic offence.

Plagiarism Checking: All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking 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 (<https://www.turnitin.com/>).

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

Please visit the Social Science Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters: [Academic Counselling - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#).

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.