



The University of Western Ontario  
**SOCIOLOGY 3423G-001**  
**Rethinking Punishment**  
**Winter 2025**

**In-Persson**

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**Course Description:**

This course examines and challenges the practices and justifications of punishment. It provides sociological and historical context for contemporary criminal justice issues and explores research that examines alternatives to mass incarceration.

***Prerequisite(s):*** Registration in third year or above in any program.

*Unless you have either the prerequisites or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in the course, 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:**

This course critically examines punishment by exploring its historical evolution and what this reveals about societal norms, ideologies, and inequalities. It investigates contemporary issues through historical understandings of deviance and justice, exploring potential alternatives to mass incarceration.

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Analyze approaches to punishment and their reflection of societal norms, ideologies, and inequalities.
  2. Examine Contemporary issues through a historical perspective
  3. Assess Alternatives to Mass Incarceration focusing on their potential effectiveness and challenges.
  4. Apply sociological insights to analyze the impact of punishment practices on different societal groups.
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## **Course Material:**

**Recommended Textbook:** Crime, Deviance, and Social Control in the 21st Century: A Justice and Rights Perspective By Claudio Colaguori

## **Supplementary Readings as posted**

## **Communication:**

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL Brightspace site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/d21/login>) 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.

## **Method of Evaluation:**

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

### **1. Intersectional Lens on Incarceration Paper: 15%**

**Due: January 27, 2025 @ 11:59pm on course website**

**Specifics:** ~1,000, double spaced, APA format (+/- 250 words)

Make a clear and specific case for why intersectionality is essential for equitable reform in Canada's criminal justice system. Reflect on how adopting an intersectional perspective can transform the system, ensuring it reduces systemic inequality rather than perpetuates it.

Using a **critical intersectional lens**, analyze the importance of understanding and addressing disparities in incarceration rates. Explore how overlapping identities—such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and Indigenous identity—combine to create unique vulnerabilities and lead to disproportionate outcomes in the justice system. Draw on relevant sociological theories, statistics, and course concepts to explain why these disparities exist and how they continue to harm certain populations. Use the **sociological imagination** to contextualize these issues within broader societal structures, emphasizing the importance of exploring and understanding the root causes of these inequities.

Conclude by proposing how intersectionality can inform more equitable policies and practices in crime and punishment, supported by evidence and theoretical insights.

### **2. Compare and Contrast: Infographic Assignment - 15%**

**Due: March 3<sup>rd</sup> @ 11:59pm On course site**

Working individually or with a partner, create an infographic that explores a current issue connected to the Canadian Justice System. The issue may be a specific crime to address or a problem arising from unjust practices. Your infographic should critically reflect on **two different approaches** to managing

the issue, providing evidence-based suggestions for implementing the approaches to addressing your concerns that you consider most effective.

### **Examples of Possible Topics:**

- Comparing "tough on crime" vs. "community-based" approaches to drug-related offenses.
- Analyzing approaches to Indigenous offenders across different historical periods.
- Contrasting punishment-based models with restorative justice models for petty theft.

### **Submission Requirements:**

- If working with a partner, both students must submit the assignment on OWL.
  - Clearly indicate in the submission notes who your partner is.
  - The workload should be shared equally, and the final product should reflect collaborative effort and quality.
- Submit a separate document with your citations (can use in-text or number citations on your infographic)

### **3. Case Study: Argumentative Essay: 20%**

**Due: March 31, 2025 @11:59pm on course site**

**Specifics:** ~2,500 words (+/- 500 words), double spaced, APA format. See rubric on course site

In this essay, you will make a strong statement about one of the key shortcomings in the current approach to incarceration or the administration of justice within a Canadian context. You will center a specific case study to illustrate this issue, examining how the case exemplifies a larger systemic problem. Through the application of sociological theory, you will show how this individual case reflects broader societal issues related to justice and incarceration. You will also critically analyze why this issue persists, using sociological concepts to explain the underlying causes and structures that maintain it. Your essay should clearly demonstrate a systemic issue and the avenues to critically understand this issue, while highlighting the harm that can come without reform or innovation. Conclude by summarizing key learnings from this case and your essay, and ground suggestions for next steps or reform in your argument.

**Late Submission relating to Assignments (not exams):** *For each assignment, students are expected to submit the assignment by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their assignment up to 48 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 48 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 10% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. As flexible deadlines are used in this course, only requests for academic consideration that are supported by academic counselling to go beyond this measure will be considered.*

### **4. Midterm Exam: 20%**

**Date: February 10, 2025 – In Class Time: 3 hours**

Mixed format exam to be completed during class time in-person. Specifics on length and topics will be given closer to examination date, but will test on lectures and readings from Week 1- Week 5.

## 5. **Final Exam: 30%**

**Date: TBD Time: 3 Hours**

**Information:** Cumulative exam to be completed during final exam time period.

### **Student Absences:**

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

University policy on academic considerations are described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found here. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.”

Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#). Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically schedule during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the [Student Medical Certificate](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam. Course professor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test.

### **Course Schedule and Readings:**

| Week   | Date                           | Topic                                    | Readings   | Notes               |
|--------|--------------------------------|--|--|---------------------|
| Week 1 | January 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2025 | Crime, Deviance, & Punishment in Society | 1. Watch: Adam Foss; A prosecutor’s vision for a better justice system<br>2. Colaguori; Ch.1 | Course Introduction |

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|---------|---------------------|---|---|--|
| Week 2  | January 13th, 2025  | Historical Trends & Theories of Crime and Deviance                        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Colaguori; Ch. 2</li> <li>2. Sara Beam; Violence and Justice in Europe: Punishment, Torture and Execution</li> </ol>  |  |
| Week 3  | January 20th, 2025  | Contemporary Theories of Crime and Punishment                             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Colaguori; Ch. 3</li> </ol>   |  |
| Week 4  | January 27th, 2025  | Mass Incarceration and Impact to Diverse Communities                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. JHS; Data on Canada's prison system</li> <li>2. JHS; CCRSO sheds light on many aspects of Canada's prison system</li> <li>3. Saad; Mass Incarceration as a Contemporary Racial Project in North America and its Stratification Across Racialized and Gendered Line</li> <li>4. Department of Justice: Understanding the Overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the Criminal Justice System</li> </ol> | Intersectional Lens on Incarceration Paper DUE |
| Week 5  | February 3rd, 2025  | Media and Crime   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Colaguori; Ch. 4</li> <li>2. Sophie Yarin; Why Are We So Obsessed with Serial Killers?</li> </ol>   |  |
| Week 6  | February 10th, 2025 | Midterm – In Class  |   |  |
| Week 7  | February 17th, 2025 | Reading Week  |   |  |
| Week 8  | February 24th, 2025 | Labeling; Deviance & Violence   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Colaguori; Ch. 5</li> <li>2. Colaguori; Ch. 8</li> </ol>  |  |
| Week 9  | March 3rd, 2025     | Differences in Crime Responses: White Collar                              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Colaguori; 9</li> <li>2. <b>Check site for supplemental readings</b></li> </ol>   | Infographic Assignment DUE                     |
| Week 10 | March 10th, 2025    | Crime Reform: Systemic and Societal                                       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Colaguori; Ch. 10</li> <li>2. <b>Check site for supplemental readings</b></li> </ol>  |  |
| Week 11 | March 17th, 2025    | Alternatives to Mass Incarceration: Community and Prevention Based Models | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Colaguori; Ch. 12</li> <li>2. <b>Check site for supplemental readings</b></li> </ol>  |  |

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| Week 12 | March 24th, 2025 | Alternative Perspectives on Managing Crime and Punishment | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. UN; Handbook of Basic Principles and Promising Practices on Alternative to Imprisonment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read Section 1, 2, 4, 5, 6</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. <b>Check site for supplemental readings</b></li> </ol> |                                     |
| Week 13 | March 31st, 2025 | Conclusions and review                                    |   | Case Study: Argumentative Essay DUE |

### **Artificial Intelligence:**

1. *All assignments must be completed independently, without the aid of artificial intelligence (AI).*
2. *Within this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploring a topic, with students expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources of information and avoiding plagiarism. Essays, written assignments and/or lab reports should reflect the student's own thoughts and independent written work. Students should also generate their own figures (e.g., graphs, diagrams) rather than using AI generated ones. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and effective learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and all them to produce original written contributions. The same principles also apply to the use of translation software to support the writing the essays and other written assessments.*

### **Academic Policies:**

Please review the Department of Sociology “[Important Academic Policies](https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf)” document [https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic\\_Policies.pdf](https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf) for additional information regarding:

- Scholastic Offences
- Plagiarism
- Copyright
- Course Selection
- Absence from Course Commitments
- Missed Tests and Exams
- Religious Accommodations
- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health

- Gender-Based and Sexual Violence statement

2024-2025