

# Sociology of Law

## SOC/CRIM 3568

Core Syllabus (online)



### Course Description

Does the law influence social change, or does social change influence the law? What are the functions of laws in society? Who influences the creation and enforcement of laws? These and more questions will be addressed in this course as we tackle topics such as dispute resolution, the legislature, and the legal system. Supreme Court cases, both historical and contemporary, will be the basis for much of our discussion and analysis.

This course should help you develop an awareness of and evaluate the interplay and reciprocal relationship between society and the law. You should also gain new perspectives about those who interact with the legal system. You will engage with multiple perspectives on the law in order to evaluate, connect, and apply a variety of interpretations to complex legal issues.

### Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- **Explain** and **evaluate** how laws are made and their role as a form of social control
- **Compare** and **contrast** theories of law and justice
- **Describe** the structure of the legal system and **analyze** the actors therein
- **Examine** the historical and social context of Supreme Court cases, **link** them to theories of law and justice, and **evaluate** their legacies

### Expectations

What are our responsibilities to each other during class? Here is what I expect from you:

- **Be prepared.** To do well in an online course, you need to be self-motivated, organized, and willing to stay on top of the schedule. You are in charge of your learning during this course, so stay caught up with the schedule and deadlines. This is extremely important, as some of the requirements utilize class-wide or group discussions. Be prepared to engage in the activities and assignments, which means having watched the lectures, completed the readings, and engaged with any other assigned materials.
- **Be “present”** in this class. This is especially important in this online environment. Be active in the discussions and engage with your peers and with me. You should expect to log onto Canvas regularly, at least 3 times per week. Also make sure that you check announcements regularly in Canvas – update your settings so that you receive announcements and notifications about class in a timely manner.
- **Be respectful.** We will be dealing with some sensitive topics and issues in this class, so make sure that your communication with your peers and with me is respectful. Even if you disagree with me or a fellow student, make sure that your comments are not attacking an individual – you can critique ideas but not individuals. Also realize that everyone comes from different backgrounds, and we all have different experiences – you may not understand someone else’s situation, but be respectful and make an effort to see things from another perspective. More on this under “Rapport” in the Policies, Guidelines, & Resources section.
- **Communicate.** If you have any issues or concerns, please contact me as soon as possible so we can address them. I want each of you to be successful in this class. I know that tough life events don’t wait for the semester breaks, so please let me know if you are struggling in any way.

In turn, here is what I'm offering to you:

- I have designed lectures, readings, other materials, and assignments to challenge you and provide you with opportunities to learn and practice course content.
- I will have course content available on or before the date indicated on the schedule. Although this is an online course that includes pre-recorded lectures, it is **not** a class that is run "automatically" by technology. I will interact with the class via announcements, emails/the Canvas Inbox, feedback on assignments, and discussion posts, among other methods.
- I will be available for consultation if you have questions or concerns. For this online course, the best way to reach me is through email or Canvas Inbox. If you prefer to have a real-time conversation, we can set up a Zoom meeting or a time to meet face-to-face on campus.
- I will do my best to foster a respectful environment in which we can share our views and explore our thoughts.
- I will adhere to the schedule as best as I can, while still maintaining the right to alter the schedule to meet the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced on Canvas.
- I will provide clear expectations of how you can be successful in this course on Canvas, through descriptions of activities, discussions, and assignments and a rubric for your final paper.
- I will follow all official University of Utah policies regarding conduct in the classroom, incompletes, and accommodations. Accommodations will be considered on an individual basis with the required documentation.

## **Discussions & Activities**

In each module you will have required discussions and activities. This is to help ensure that you are engaging with and understanding the material. These provide moments of self-reflection and opportunities to explore your understanding of material in a low stake manner, and also allow you to engage with other students in the class, ask questions, and push your thinking forward.

## **Reading Quizzes**

You will take quizzes on the required readings throughout the semester. These quizzes will be administered through Canvas. The quizzes are meant to help you stay caught up with the reading and ensure you are engaging with the material.

## **Tests**

The tests will be administered through Canvas. The tests are meant to evaluate what you have learned in class, so use your notes as your reference material.

## **Supreme Court Project**

You will research one of the current Supreme Court Justices and also complete a two-part assignment on a Supreme Court case that is of interest to you (you may choose from a list of pre-approved cases, or bring a case to the instructor for approval). You will then take on the role of your assigned Justice to consider how they might vote on other cases your peers have researched.

### ***Supreme Court Justice Biography***

You will start by researching one of the current Supreme Court Justices. You will be assigned a specific Justice, and you will create a short biography that covers important elements of their background and how they have voted on some important Supreme Court cases. At the end of the semester, you will get to take on the role of this Justice and consider how you think they would vote on some cases.

### ***Supreme Court Ruling***

Part one of your two-part Supreme Court Case assignment is to research the background of the case and explain how the Supreme Court ruled in the case.

### ***Social & Historical Context and Legacy***

Part two of your two-part Supreme Court Case assignment involves describing the social and historical context within which the case was decided, as well as discussing the legacy of the case and the impact of the ruling.

### ***Writing Center Reviews***

In an effort to help you refine your writing, everyone is required to make appointments with the [University Writing Center](#) prior to submitting both the Supreme Court Ruling and Social & Historical Context and Legacy assignments.

### ***Voting***

You will share your completed two-part written project on your Supreme Court case with a small discussion group. You will read the papers submitted by your peers to learn about those cases, and then you will take on the role of the Supreme Court Justice you researched earlier in the semester and decide how you think they would vote on those cases if they were before the Supreme Court today.

### **Policies, Guidelines, & Resources**

For the most up-to-date policies on the Americans with Disabilities Act, Safety, Addressing Sexual Misconduct, and Academic Misconduct, please visit the [Center For Teaching Excellence's website on institutional policies](#).

# Tentative Course Schedule

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topics &amp; Readings</b>	<b>What's Due</b>
Week 1	<b>Introduction</b> <b>What is the Law?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity</li> <li>• Activity</li> </ul>
Week 2	<b>Theories of Law &amp; Justice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Reading Quiz</li> </ul>
Week 3	<b>Law &amp; Society, How Laws are Made</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity</li> <li>• Reading Quiz</li> </ul>
Week 4	<b>The Constitution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Assignment: Justice Biography</li> </ul>
Week 5	<b>Dispute Resolution &amp; Policy Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Reading Quiz</li> </ul>
Week 6	<b>Organization of the Courts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment: Identify SCOTUS Case</li> <li>• Test 1</li> </ul>
Week 7	<b>Lawyers: Profession &amp; Workplace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Center Appointment</li> <li>• Activity</li> <li>• Assignment: SCOTUS Ruling</li> </ul>
Week 8	<b>Lawyers: Underrepresented &amp; Criminal Counsel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Reading Quiz</li> </ul>
Week 9	<b>Lawyers: Access to Justice &amp; Legal Ethics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>
Week 10	<b><i>Break!</i></b>	
Week 11	<b>Juries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Reading Quiz</li> </ul>
Week 12	<b>Sentencing &amp; Wrongful Conviction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Center Appointment</li> <li>• Activity</li> <li>• Assignment: Context and Legacy</li> </ul>
Week 13	<b>Judicial Selection &amp; Decision-Making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Quiz</li> </ul>
Week 14	<b>The Supreme Court</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity</li> <li>• Test 2</li> </ul>
Week 15	<b>Wrap-Up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity</li> <li>• Activity</li> </ul>
Week 16	<b>Voting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment: Justice Votes</li> </ul>
Finals Week	<b>Extra Credit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra Credit</li> </ul>

*Details are subject to change, and will be announced via Canvas.*