

Crime and Punishment in Ancient Greece and Rome

Preliminary Course Outline for CS 2301B 650 (Winter 2026)

An online, asynchronous course with in-person examinations



Welcome To Crime And Punishment!

Ancient Greek and Roman history and literature are full of stories of crimes and representations of criminals. This course examines the ways Greeks and Romans thought about what it meant to be a criminal and what kinds of solutions they had for the problems of crime. We'll look at Orestes' murder of his mother, Clytemnestra, and at Socrates' idea of crime. We'll argue whether Catiline, who conspired to assassinate Cicero and burn Rome, should have been treated as a Roman citizen with a right to a trial or whether he was rightly treated as an enemy combatant. We'll ask whether modern theories of criminology are applicable to ancient Greece and Rome or whether ancient ideas of crime were completely different from modern ones. No previous knowledge of Greece and Rome is necessary and all readings will be in English.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of this course you will be familiar with a variety of ancient ideas of crime and criminality as well as some modern criminological theory. You will understand the similarities and differences between ancient Greek and Roman ideas of crime and modern ones. This will give you a new perspective on crime in today's society.

More generally and more importantly, you will have gained or advanced an ability to analyze ancient Greek and Roman sources in a variety of genres. Ancient sources are not always straightforward or trustworthy, and you will practice "reading against the grain," i.e. reading ancient texts to find out more than just what they want to tell you.

By the end of this course you will have learned not just how to use ancient sources as evidence, but also how to evaluate those sources for their accuracy and significance. In the process you will have improved your skills in critical thinking and analysis—skills which are transferrable to a variety of fields of study and professional employment, and which will improve your appreciation of any text.

Most importantly, this course aims to develop an appreciation of ancient Greek and Roman literature, philosophy, rhetoric, and history. It will be work, but it should also be fun, and you may find yourself with a lifelong appreciation of ancient Greece and Rome.

Required Texts:

The following is a list of editions I have ordered for the Western Bookstore. You may obtain these texts however you wish, but it is your responsibility to get them *and* read them. I will discuss passages from these specific editions and translations in the lectures and I will include passages from them in questions on tests. If you do not have the same editions and translations as I'm using you will be at a disadvantage in class and in evaluations. Additional readings will be available in OWL.

1. Aeschylus. *Aeschylus II: The Oresteia*. eds. David Grene, Richmond Lattimore, Mark Griffith, and Glenn W. Most. trans. Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0226311470. I have requested that this book be placed on reserve in DBW (PA3827.A46 2013). Online price: \$18.85
2. Plato. *Gorgias*. trans. Robin Waterfield. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. ISBN: 978-0199540327. I have requested that this book be placed on reserve in DBW (B371.A5W37 1994). Online price: \$9.95
3. Sallust. *Catiline's War, The Jugurthine War, Histories*. trans. A.J. Woodman. New York: Penguin, 2007. ISBN: 978-0140449488. I have requested that this book be placed on reserve in DBW (DG207.S4W66 2007). Online price: \$23.00

Suggested Texts:

The lectures on Greek Law and Roman Law are derived from Russ VerSteeg's book listed below. This book is often difficult for students to acquire in hard copy, but there is now an e-book option for those who would like it. I have also assigned some chapters from Sandra Walklate's introduction to the study of criminology. This book (now in its third edition) is available online through Western Libraries. You can download/print the assigned chapters, or, if you wish, purchase a print/digital copy through your preferred bookseller.

1. VerSteeg, Russ. *The Essentials of Greek and Roman Law*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2010. E-book cost: \$46.95.
2. [Walklate, Sandra. *Criminology: The Basics*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2017.](#) (The link takes you to Weldon's electronic copy). Purchase is not required.

Evaluation/Grade Breakdown:

NOTE: MIDTERM TESTS AND THE FINAL EXAM WILL BE IN PERSON

1. Midterm Test 1: 25% (Date TBA)
2. Midterm Test 2: 25% (Date TBA)
3. Final Exam: 50% (Scheduled by the Registrar)

IMPORTANT COURSE POLICIES:

1. **Midterm Tests:** the two midterm tests will take place in person, on campus, at a designated time. These tests are multiple choice, and non-cumulative. There will be 50 questions and you will have 60 minutes to complete the test. You will be required to present ID and sign the nominal roll. You will also be required to mark your answers both on the test paper and on a bubble sheet that will be used for grading using Gradescope. If there are any problems with the bubble sheet, such as stray marks that make your answer potentially ambiguous, the software will flag the issue and I will review the sheet to make sure your answers are recorded correctly.
2. **Electronic Devices:** no aids are permitted for the assessments in this course. Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted.
3. **Statement on the use of Generative AI:** in this course, students are permitted to use AI tools for information gathering. The use of AI tools on the tests is not permitted.
4. **Gradescope Review:** computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.
5. **Missed Tests:** if you miss a midterm test, my policy is that you will be given an opportunity to write a make up test. These are normally scheduled in the week following the original test, will likewise be in person, and will be in the same format (multiple-choice) as the original test.
6. **Academic Progression:** If you know that you need a specific minimum course grade to maintain your AEO status, scholarship, program standing etc., it is your responsibility to check throughout the term to ensure that you are on track. No additional points will be added at the end of the course to help you achieve your desired grade (see next bullet point).
7. **Policy on Reweighting, Extra Work and/or Grade Increases:** Because each midterm test evaluates course content separately (i.e. the tests are not cumulative), it is not possible to reweight one test to make up for a missed assessment. Similarly, do not ask to do an extra assignment to improve your grade. In the interests of fairness to all students, I do not grant such requests. For the same reason, final grades are not negotiable and, unless there has been an error in calculating your grade, I will not grant any requests that a grade be changed.

8. **Rounding Policy for Final Course Grades:** The final course grade is rounded up if the first decimal is 5 or higher (e.g., a calculated grade of 77.5 will be submitted as 78%).
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Academic Policies

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Mental Health@Western](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Academic Accommodation and Accessible Education

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.” <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity. Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its [academic programs are accessible](#) for all students.

General Information about Missed Coursework

- Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs* posted on the Academic Calendar: <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>
- This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).
- For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar’s webpage: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>
- All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.
- All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course. However, the final examination (scheduled by the Registrar) is excluded from this, and therefore always requires formal supporting documentation.

Academic Advising

Your Home Faculty’s Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/facultyacademiccounselling.html>

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

If you miss the final exam (in December) for this course, you must contact the Academic Counselling or Academic Advising office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination, and they will require documentation of your reason for missing the exam. You may not request academic consideration for a December exam without documentation. You may also be eligible to write the Special Examination if you have an exam conflict or if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., 3 or more exams in a 23-hour period or 4 or more exams in a 47-hour period).

The Special Examinations for this course will have the same format as the regular examinations. According to the policy in the Academic Calendar, “Special Examinations must be written at the University or recognized exam center or an Affiliated University College, and supersede any lectures, tutorials, laboratories, etc., in which the student is registered. Note that students are responsible for any coursework, etc., missed while writing the Special Examination.” In other words, if you have to miss a scheduled class to write a Special Examination, your priority is the Special Examination.

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the [Learning Development and Success Centre](#) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling. Additional [student-run support services](#) are offered by the USC.

Academic 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: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Gender-based and Sexual Violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, [here](#). **To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.**

Copyright

Lectures and course materials, including power point presentations, outlines, and similar materials, are protected by copyright. You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own educational use. You may not record lectures, reproduce (or allow others to reproduce), post or distribute lecture notes, wiki material, and other course materials publicly and/or for commercial purposes without my written consent.

Technical Requirements For Remote Learning

Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the system requirements for OWL.

Schedule of Readings and Lecture Topics

Dates	Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments
Week 1 (Jan. 05-09)	Lecture: Introduction to Crime and Punishment in Ancient Greece and Rome Reading: No reading for this week
Week 2 (Jan. 12-16)	Lecture: Historical Background and Context Reading: No reading for this week
Week 3 (Jan. 19-23)	Lecture: Introduction to Greek Law Reading: (Optional) Chapters 1, 2, 7, 8 in VerSteeg, <i>The Essentials of Greek and Roman Law</i>
Week 4 (Jan. 26-30)	Lecture: Greek Tragedy of Crime Reading: Aeschylus, <i>The Oresteia</i>
Week 5 (Feb. 02-06)	Lecture: No lecture for this week Reading: No reading for this week Midterm #1
Week 6 (Feb. 09-13)	Lecture: Modern Criminology and Ancient Crime Reading: Walklate, <i>Criminology: The Basics</i> chapters 1, 4, 5 (available online through Western Libraries)
<i>FEBRUARY 14-22</i>	<i>READING WEEK</i>
Week 7 (Feb. 23-27)	Lecture: Athens and Draco's Homicide Law Reading: Lysias I (available on OWL)
Week 8 (Mar. 02-06)	Lecture: Greek Philosophy of Crime Reading: Plato, <i>Gorgias</i>
Week 9 (Mar. 09-13)	Lecture: No lecture for this week Reading: No reading for this week Midterm #2
Week 10 (Mar. 16-20)	Lecture: Introduction to Roman Law Reading: (Optional) Chapters 10, 11, 16, & 17 in VerSteeg, <i>The Essentials of Greek and Roman Law</i>
Week 11 (Mar. 23-27)	Lecture: Criminals and Enemy Combatants Reading: Sallust, <i>Catiline's War</i>
Week 12 (Mar. 30-Apr.08)	Lecture: Character and Ciceronian Crime Reading: Cicero, <i>In Defense of Marcus Caelius</i> (available on OWL)

The Final Examination (cumulative) will be Scheduled by the Office of the Registrar