

Soc 402-B1 (91998)  
Soc 504-B2 (95139): Winter, 2018

**Selected Topics/Conference Course in Sociology (Course weight: \*3)  
University of Alberta  
Course Outline<sup>1</sup>**

Instructor: Dr. George Pavlich  
Time: Thursdays, 2-4:50pm, T 1 83  
Office Hours: Wed, 1pm- 3pm, or by appointment.  
Office: Tory 6-18  
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## **Sociology, Criminal Law and Criminal Accusation**

### **Course Summary**

For millennia, societies have fashioned boundaries through rituals of accusation that allege wrongdoing. Such rituals vary over time, but accusers often enlist ‘public fame’, suspicion and blame to allege that a wrong, or a crime has been committed. Although ideas and practices of accusation assume diverse historical forms, they tend to arrest everyday life, and inaugurate social entrances, or gateways, that decide on whether to channel accused subjects into or out of formal justice networks. Criminal accusation has thereby become pivotal to populating modern justice systems directed to the guilt and punishment of ‘criminals’. It works at the foundations of criminalizing processes, and initiates a crime’s journey into being.

Given that constitutive role, it is remarkable that criminal accusation has attracted scarce scholarly attention. Consequently, and in response, this course first attends to the contingency of what is considered a crime in different contexts. Secondly, it explores the role of criminal accusation at the start of criminalization processes, emphasizing its history, ideas, rituals and social consequences. Finally, it situates discussions of crime and accusation in the context of Canadian settler-colonial law, exploring how accusatory gateways serve as unequal conduits to populate crime-control arenas. It will thereby explore contingent practices that initiate criminalization, and consider possibilities for justice beyond exclusive notions of crime and punishment.

### **Course Objectives**

The substantive aim of the course is, accordingly, threefold:

- to problematize absolute ideas about crime and criminals, highlighting the contingency of criminalization processes;
- to explore critically the role of accusation at gateways to criminalization;
- and to critically evaluate settler-colonial legacies of accusation and unequal entrances to criminal justice systems.

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<sup>1</sup> Policy about course outlines can be found in Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures and Grading of the University Calendar.

Upon completing this course, participants should be able to:

- Critically review perspectives on the contingent nature of crime and criminalization;
- Communicate lucidly selected historical ideas and rituals of criminal accusation, and their social consequences;
- Present organized ideas on the history and social effects of accusatory entrances to criminal law;
- Identify consequential effects of the legacy of settler-colonial criminal law for social justice and reconciliation in Canada;
- Articulate scholarly ideas through a convincingly developed essay, and critically reflect on the social implications thereof.

To achieve such objectives, it is expected that all participants will attend classes having read required readings carefully, and offering informed contributions to class discussions. Please therefore complete required readings in advance of weekly topics, and be prepared (which may include reading beyond required material) for reflective discussion. Thoughtful participation in class is a key component of the course.

## Required Texts

The course will anchor itself around the following texts:

1. Reiner, Robert. 2016. *Crime, the Mystery of the Common-Sense Concept*. Malden, MA: Polity Press (Required).
2. Pavlich, George and Matt Unger (eds). 2016. *Accusation: Creating Criminals*. Vancouver: UBC Press (Required).
3. Monchalin, Lisa. 2016. *The Colonial Problem: An Indigenous Perspective on Crime and Injustice in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (Recommended).

(Supplementary reading should be consulted as appropriate)

## Evaluation

This course will require participants to engage in independent research as an integral part of the course.

All written assignments are to be uploaded as **PDF documents** to the eClass website for this course before due dates and times.

This course is to be assessed through the following means:

1. Thoughtful, critical contributions to in-class seminars (10%)
2. Reading Group activities (10%)
  - 500 word in-class reading group presentation summary to be uploaded to eclass by noon on the Wed before class presentation (5%)
  - Max 15 minute, in-class reading group presentation (5%)
3. 1000-word maximum scholarly book review, due **Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> February** 2018 before noon (20)
4. 5000-word research paper, due **Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> April** 2018 before 5 pm [**Note:** 7000-words for grad students]. The word limits do not include reference lists, (60%)

## Details of Course Evaluation

### 1. Thoughtful contribution to class discourse (10%)

Prepared, thoughtful and constructive contributions to class discourses will be credited up to 10% of the total grade. In all cases, the overall quality of carefully framed contributions to discussion will be assessed. Since the course encourages critical thinking, theoretical disagreements are to be expected. However, please always ensure that your contributions are respectfully presented, relevant to the readings/course, and offer reasoned

justifications for any positions taken.

## **2. In-class Reading Groups (10%)**

Towards the third week of class, each person will be assigned to a reading group. These groups will assemble to discuss readings in many classes, and will continue throughout the term.

However, on a specifically assigned day in the last part of the class (order to be finalized in class), your reading group will be responsible for leading the class through an assigned reading for a one of the weekly topics. Each member of the reading group will be designated a role for that class (i.e., passage analyst; creative leader; critical connections leader; Q&A discussant). Each member of the group is to prepare (according to your assigned role) a 500-word summary of what will be presented. This summary is to be uploaded to eclass by noon on the Wednesday prior to the class presentation.

Your part of the reading group's presentation is to last no longer than 15 minutes. It is advisable that reading groups meet outside of class to organize the overall presentation, and the sequence of particular presentations. The overall coherence of the group's presentation will be taken into consideration when evaluating each person's contribution.

## **3. Scholarly Book Review (20%)**

Book reviews are to be no more than 1000 words, and are due Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2018 before noon. You are to review **one** of the following texts, clearly indicating on the title page your selection:

1. Reiner, Robert. 2016. *Crime, the Mystery of the Common-Sense Concept*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
2. Monchalin, Lisa. 2016. *The Colonial Problem: An Indigenous Perspective on Crime and Injustice in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Please note that the aim of an excellent scholarly book review is not simply to reiterate minutiae of a text's argument, or to restate a book's chapter-by-chapter organization. Rather, it is to locate a conceptual background to which the book responds, and to critically evaluate the author's thesis, approach, objectives, claims, methodology and so on. Much of your review will thus comprise an assessment of how convincingly the main arguments and themes of the book are enunciated. Since you have only 1000 words to convey to your reader a comprehensive sense of the book, it is essential that you write concisely, and find thoughtful ways to communicate a critical evaluation effectively.

## **4. Final Research Essay (60%)**

A 5000-word (max) research paper for undergraduate students (and a 7000-word max paper for graduate students) is to be uploaded onto the eClass website for his class on Thursday, **12<sup>th</sup> April 2018 before 5 pm**. References are not included in the word limits.

Essay topics will be assigned in consultation with each student. The topics must develop, by way of independent research, a line of thought that emerges from the main themes of this course. It is advisable to write up a brief (half page) essay proposal, and to meet with the instructor in designated times in class (i.e., at the end of classes in late February or March, time will be made available expressly for this purpose). All essay topics must be approved by the Instructor by **5th April**. Approved topics may not be changed without permission (a 25% penalty will be levied for unapproved topic changes).

Please take careful note of the following points:

- All written assignments must be uploaded as PDF files onto the eClass for this course before the due date/time. No work will be accepted in any other form.
- Adhere strictly to the word limits (references are not included in the word maximums).
- All late work that do not have instructor exemptions will attract significant penalties.

[Specifically, a 15% penalty will be applied for every 24 hours (or portion thereof and including weekends) for late work. Research papers will not be accepted 72 hours after the due date]

Please keep a copy of all class assignments in case of mishap. Essays will be graded using the “Essay Criteria” document posted on eClass.

## Grading

Final grades for this course are calculated by adding raw scores to make up a percentage mark. Marks will not be altered because they appear near of at category cut-off points.

Please note that in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act, no requests for grades will be granted by phone, email and so on.

### Description Percentage Grade Point Value:

Descriptor	Percentage	Letter Grade	GPA
Excellent	95–100	A+	4.00
	90–94	A	4.00
	85–89	A-	3.7
Good	80–84	B+	3.3
	75–79	B	3.0
	70–74	B-	2.7
Satisfactory	66–69	C+	2.3
	62–65	C	2.0
	58–61	C-	1.7
Poor	54–57	D+	1.3
Minimal Pass	50–53	D	1.0
Fail	0–49	F	0.0

## Plagiarism and Cheating Policies

Please note: “Policy about course outlines can be found in Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures and Grading of the University Calendar”

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at [www.governance.ualberta.ca](http://www.governance.ualberta.ca)) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

Please see also: “Don’t Cheat” — see [www.governance.ualberta.ca/StudentAppeals/DontCheatsheet.aspx](http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/StudentAppeals/DontCheatsheet.aspx).

### **Recording of Classes**

Please note: ‘Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).’

### **Access to Instructor**

Participants may consult with Dr. Pavlich during posted office hours or by appointment. Email will be received during the normal business hours of the University. Please allow for up to three business days for a reply, even though the instructor will make an effort to answer emails as rapidly as possible. Please do not use email contact for extended discussion, or for clarification of theoretical matters better suited to dialogue in classes, or during office hours.