University of Guelph  
College of Social and Applied Human Sciences  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Course: SOC 3730 – Courts and Society  
Instructor: Michelle Dumas  
Office: TBA  
Office Hours: TBA  
Lecture Time: Wed, 7-9:50 pm  
E-mail: mdumas@uoguelph.ca

Course Description

This course focuses on various aspects of the criminal justice system – from the period between when an individual is charged with an offence to the final determination (guilty/not guilty) and sentence (if found guilty). Thus, issues around plea-bargaining, pre-trial detention, juries, sentencing goals, and restorative justice will be explored. Other substantive topics explored in this course include: the role of the defence and prosecutor lawyers; the role of victims in court, juveniles in court, media representations of court procedures, and the effects and ramifications of wrongful convictions. Throughout the course, the historical, sociological, and social-psychological aspects of the courts, and the decisions made within, will also be explored. The course will consist of both lectures and required readings.

Course Objectives

There are two main objectives for this course. The first objective is to help students gain a broad understanding of how our court processes function within society. The second objective is the get students to critically assess aspects of our 'justice' system and our ability to achieve the values that we, as a democratic society, hold.

Required Text*

- Additional readings (available on reserve)

Evaluation¹

Midterm: 30%  
Paper: 40%  
Final Exam: 30%

¹ Note: may be subject to change prior to semester start.