

LW5663Z: LAW AND ECONOMICS OF CRIME

Effective Term

Semester A 2026/27

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Law and Economics of Crime

Subject Code

LW - Law

Course Number

5663Z

Academic Unit

School of Law (FL)

College/School

School of Law (FL)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

1.5

Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

LW5602A Law of Contract I or equivalent. Some courses under this intensive seminar may have specific pre-requisite. Students should refer to the individual course information for details.

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course will provide the theoretical framework for understanding optimal crime policy, as well as the empirical work that both tests the theory and helps set actual crime policies.

Specifically, the course works through the economic model of crime, comparing it with sociology, psychology, and criminology models. We then examine the empirical work on the relationship between policy choices (e.g., level of policing; severity of punishment) and crime levels. In a cost-benefit framework, we discuss how optimal crime policy is determined.

We also analyze non-policy influences on crime, such as economic conditions, demographics, and culture to help determine why crime varies so much from place to place.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if DEC-A1 app.)		DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Describe and explain the basic concepts and principles related to the given seminar			x	
2	Apply the concepts and principles to solve hypothetical or real situations			x	x
3	Communicate ideas, arguments or advice clearly and coherently both orally and in writing		x	x	x
4	Critically analyse and evaluate concepts, principles and policy underpinning the area of law covered by the seminar		x	x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Interactive Seminar	1, 2, 3, 4	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs		CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Sit-down assessment / or other requirement specified by course lecturer	1, 2, 3, 4	100	Pass/Fail Grade only Good Attendance – 75% plus	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

Attendance and class participation

Criterion

Demonstration of preparation for tutorial problems and other exercises.

Demonstration of ability and willingness to answer questions in tutorials and to participate in group discussion.

Demonstration of oral presentation skills and willingness.

Pass (P)

Excellent: Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization, capacity to analyse and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.

Good: Evidence of grasp of subject, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.

Fair: Student who is profiting from the university experience; understanding of the subject; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.

Marginal: Sufficient familiarity with the subject matter to enable the student to progress without repeating the course.

Failure (F)

Little evidence of familiarity with the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited, or irrelevant use of literature.

Assessment Task

Sit-down assessment / or other requirement specified by course lecturer

Criterion

Demonstration of understanding of concepts, principles, and theories.

Demonstration of ability to identify legal issues.

Application of knowledge to specific legal problems, to discuss questions, and to comment on legal phenomenon.

Application of legal writing and research skills.

Demonstration of ability to engage in argument-based analysis based on critical thinking.

Demonstration of aptitude for formulating innovative solutions to designated fact-based questions.

Pass (P)

Excellent: Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization, capacity to analyse and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.

Good: Evidence of grasp of subject, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.

Fair: Student who is profiting from the university experience; understanding of the subject; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.

Marginal: Sufficient familiarity with the subject matter to enable the student to progress without repeating the course.

Failure (F)

Little evidence of familiarity with the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited, or irrelevant use of literature.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Course Objectives:

1. Understand the rational actor model of crime (e.g. examine the limitations and premises)
2. Understand how policy choices can be optimized using economics and statistics.
3. Understand how legal institutions might constrain the implementation of optimal policy.
4. Discuss how the law and economics perspective, as well as statistical evidence, can be useful across legal areas.

Classes:

1. The rational actor model of crime
 - How do people respond to expected costs and benefits
 - What does this imply for optimal crime policy
 - Other models of criminal behavior
2. Policing

- Empirical estimates of the effect of police on crime
- Police substitutes
- Cost benefit analysis

3. Prisons

- Empirical estimates of effect of prison on crime
- Prison substitutes
- Cost benefit analysis

4. Other policy alternatives

- Surveillance
- Education
- Others

5. Alcohol/Drugs and Crime

- Effect of alcohol and alcohol policies
- Effect of drugs and drug policies
- Drug crimes

6. Effect of culture and legal institutions on crime

- Why does crime vary so much place to place
- Conflicts between legal rights and optimal crime policy
- Structural issues

7. White Collar Crime

- Is white collar crime different
- Antitrust, Fraud. Etc.
- Regulation vs Criminal Law vs Civil Law

Grading Scheme

Pass/Fail Grade only

Good Attendance – 75% plus

Sit-down assessment / or other requirement specified by course lecturer

Reading List