

Criminology

2025-2026



Need to Know:

Room: 276

Teacher: Becky Balfour “Balf”

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Classroom Code: o6bitzo

The Course: The first quarter of this semester-long course will be spent exploring forensic criminology. We will investigate the various fields of study in forensic and this will culminate in the investigation of a crime.

The second quarter, we will explore the institutions that make up the legal system in the United States; including our country’s courts on the local, state, and national level, our country’s incarceration facilities, our civil and criminal laws, and how they

are enforced. This will culminate into a mock trial where we will put a suspect on trial.

In the 2nd quarter; we will examine the court system and follow cases as they make their way through the legal system. We will also attempt to understand the contradictions between the principles that created our democracy and the ways that some groups are marginalized, disenfranchised, and further oppressed using those very systems.

The Constitution deems “**judicial power**” as the privilege of “*independent power to interpret and apply the Constitution.*” Alexander Hamilton argued that the judicial branch can only judge, without force or will.

Others argued that with this power, the courts could “mold the Constitution into whatever they wished it to be.” The word **just** comes from the Latin root for **right**. Judicial power and interpretation is really about deciding what is right, just, and how justice should be enforced throughout the nation.

In the image on the left side of this page; Lady Justice wears a blindfold because justice is meant to be “impartial,” in the same way that courts and judges are meant to weigh both support and opposition, without heed to any factors such as wealth, power, race, or other status.

Grades:

- Grades will be based on points assigned for work completed.
- Most of the work will be completed IN class. There will be very little homework assigned. Typically, you will have homework because you were out and missed the work completed in class. Grades are posted in Google Classroom
- You will receive full credit for classwork turned in up until the last day of the quarter.
 - However, points will be deducted for late projects.

Units of Study:

- ❖ **Forensics** → fields of study and unpacking how a crime scene is handled
- ❖ **Supreme Court** → landmark cases
- ❖ **Laws and the Court system:** laws, lawmaking, lawyers, civil vs criminal law
- ❖ **Criminal Justice Process:** Torts, Investigative phase, pre-trial proceedings, the trial, sentencing
- ❖ **Social Justice** → prison industrial complex, mass incarceration, prison reform
- ❖ **Mock Trial:** Trial from beginning to end

Classroom Responsibilities

- Students are expected to be **in class on time**.
- If a student needs to leave class, the student will sign out.
- Students will be **respectful** of all classmates, even when there are disagreements.
- Remain **open minded** throughout the course and use your critical thinking skills!
- Bring a laptop or device to work on.
- Phones should be silenced for the duration of the class period.
- Complete all assignments with academic integrity. This means that students will not plagiarize (knowingly pass off another's work as your own), or allow others to plagiarize from you.

Additional Instructional Materials:

In addition to the films listed in the library catalog, Legal Studies students may occasionally view documentaries and films. The instructional materials used at Hollis Brookline High School represent a broad range of knowledge, viewpoints, and experiences as well as a diversity of religious, ethnic, and cultural groups. Materials support curricular goals, stimulate academic growth, and

provide students an opportunity to practice critical analysis while developing the ability to make intelligent judgments in their daily lives.

A parent who wishes to have their student exempt from the use of any material, such as a video or novel utilized in a class, must notify the teacher as soon as possible so an alternative assignment for that individual student can be arranged.

If you have questions about the selection of course materials, please review the HBHS Cooperative School Board Policy IIA Instructional and Library Media Materials which can be found at:

<http://policy.ctspublish.com/hollis-brookline-nhsba/>

Essential Questions:

- ❖ What is justice?
- ❖ Has the Supreme Court created a more just society?
- ❖ Are trials fair?
- ❖ Is our criminal justice system truly just?
- ❖ Is it possible to correct injustice in the legal system?

Some other talking points...

There are roughly 2.2 million people incarcerated in America today; convicted and some waiting for a trial: a 500% increase from 500,000 people incarcerated in 1980.

While the United States makes up 5% of the world's population, it makes up 21% of the world's prisoners.

African Americans and Hispanic people make up 32% of the United States' population, but 56% of the country's incarcerated population.

([NAACP](#))