

# **Criminal Law A**

## **2014**

Course Outline

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## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **1. OVERVIEW**

Criminal Law is taught in the third year of the LLB degree, and consists of two semester courses: Criminal Law A and Criminal Law B. The purpose of Criminal Law A is to introduce students to the general principles of criminal liability, participants in crime and to the principles underlying incomplete (inchoate) crimes. By the end of the course students should be able to evaluate and discuss these elements, and solve problems based on factual scenarios.

Successful completion of Criminal Law A is a prerequisite for Criminal Law B.

### **2. CREDIT VALUE: 10**

This works out as follows:

- 18 hours: 24 lectures @ 45 mins each
- .75 hours: 1 written test
- 2 hours: 1 written examination
- 79.25 hours: Individual learning (pre- and post-lecture reading, preparation of written assignment, test and examination preparation)

Total: 100 hours work

### **3. ASSUMPTIONS OF PRIOR LEARNING**

In order to successfully complete this course, students should:

- Be capable of communicating competently in written and spoken English;
- Be able to work/study independently by reading, extracting and analysing relevant information from various sources of law;
- Know how and where to access resources, and so be capable of using the library and electronic resources;
- Be capable of applying legal problem-solving techniques;
- Have the ability to follow appropriate legal referencing conventions in written work.

### **4. OUTCOMES**

#### **4.1 Critical Cross-Field Outcomes:**

It is expected that this course should contribute to the following critical cross-field outcomes, in that by the end of the course students should be able to:

- a) work in a team

- b) organise and manage themselves
- c) collect, analyse and evaluate information
- d) communicate effectively
- e) recognise problem solving contexts
- f) identify and solve problems

## 4.2 Specific Intended Outcomes

It is intended that by the end of this course students will be able to:

- a) Understand the fundamental values underlying criminal justice in South Africa;
- b) Explain the functions and objectives of criminal law;
- c) Show an in-depth understanding of the general principles that underlie Criminal Law;
- d) Identify and apply the various defences that may exclude criminal liability;
- e) Define various forms of participation in criminal activities and their consequences;
- f) Explain why criminal liability arises for incomplete crimes;
- g) Understand and appreciate the influence of Constitutional principles on the Criminal Law, and how these have been harmonised with common law principles;
- h) Evaluate the laws governing Criminal Law;
- i) Apply the knowledge gained during the course to solve practical problems.

## 5. TEACHING METHOD

The course comprises two lectures per week, canvassing the law as contained in textbooks, case law and legislation. There is no comprehensive handout for the course and students are expected to take their own notes during lectures and to supplement these on their own after the lectures. Class discussions will be held, and students will have to participate actively in these; *i.e.* be able to explain case law and consider practical questions. Students must prepare for lectures by doing the prescribed readings before each lecture. It is expected that students assume responsibility for their own learning by independent study according to the guidance provided by the detailed course outline. Lectures are compulsory, and students are expected to familiarise themselves with the DP and Leave of Absence policies of the Faculty. In this respect please refer to the Law Students' Survival Guide 2013.

**The onus is on students to keep track of how many lectures they have missed.**

## 6. COURSE CONTENT

- 1) Definitions & Introductory Concepts  
Fundamental values, Functions and Objectives of Criminal Law
- 2) Overview: General Principles of Criminal Liability
- 3) General Principles:
  - 3.1) Unlawful Conduct
  - 3.2) Defences Excluding Unlawfulness
  - 3.3) Capacity
  - 3.4) Fault
- 4) Participation in Criminal Activities
- 5) Incomplete (Inchoate) Crimes
- 6) Conclusion

## 7. RESOURCES

In order to assist your preparation for lectures, a course outline listing the core readings is provided. However, it will be in your own interests to read more widely than the readings listed. You will find the leading judgments on aspects of Criminal Law in the relevant Law Reports, which may be accessed in the Law Library, both in paper and electronic form.

Prescribed Textbook:

CR *Snyman Criminal Law* 5th ed (2008).

Recommended Textbooks:

CR *Snyman Criminal Law Casebook* 4th ed (2008).

J Burchell *Principles of Criminal Law* 3rd ed (2004).

J Burchell and J Milton *Cases and Materials on Criminal Law* (1996).

Other texts may be referred to during the course and students may also be referred to Journal articles. Students are encouraged to utilise all the available library resources, and to familiarise themselves with the relevant Criminal Law texts by browsing through the shelves in the library.

## 8. STUDENT ASSESSMENT

<b>Intended Specific Outcomes:</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria:</b>
Upon successful completion this course, students will be able to:	Students must provide evidence that they can:
1. Understand the fundamental values underlying criminal justice in South Africa;	Identify and explain the meaning, origins and status of each of the identified values of our criminal justice.

2. Explain the functions and objectives of criminal law;	Identify the role of the Criminal Law, and explain its importance in everyday life.
3. Show an in-depth understanding of the general principles that underlie the Criminal Law;	Identify and explain, as well as critically analyse the basic principles of Criminal Law, including: a) principles of criminal liability: unlawful conduct, capacity, fault, causation; b) defences that exclude criminal liability; c) various forms of participation in criminal activities and their consequences; d) liability for incomplete crimes.
4. Apply the knowledge gained during the course to solve practical problems.	Synthesise and integrate the knowledge gained in order to propose practical solutions to problems associated with the Criminal Law, and to be able to advise accordingly.
5. Evaluate the laws governing Criminal Law.	a) Identify and find relevant texts, judicial decisions, journal writings and other resources relevant to Criminal Law. b) Explain these laws and analyse their adequacy. c) Identify shortfalls and make suggestions for law reform.
6. Understand and appreciate the influence of Constitutional principles on the Criminal Law, and how these have been harmonised with common law principles;	a) Identify the key constitutional provisions that affect the Criminal Law. b) Explain the implications and effects of these provisions c) Analyse current constitutional reforms in the Criminal Law.

**Assessment Criteria:**

The final mark for the course is comprised of the following components:

Class Work: 30 marks

Examination: 70 marks

**Total: 100 marks**

**Assignment :** Due date to be advised.

There is one major assignment for this course. The assignment is **compulsory** and comprises half of the class mark (15%). No late assignments will be accepted for marking, unless the student has a valid Leave of Absence. Failure to submit an assignment by the due date will result in the removal of the student's DP certificate.

**Test:** Date to be advised.

There is one test for this course, which will make up the other half of the class mark (15%). The test will contain questions equivalent to those which will be found in the June examination. The test is **compulsory** and will be written during the relevant lecture period. The test will cover everything we have done in the course up until that date.

### **Examination**

The June examination for this course will comprise a two-hour long paper. Students can expect both theory and problem-type questions in this exam. The mark obtained in the exam counts 70% towards the final mark. The examination is compulsory. An external examiner will assess the quality of both the examination paper and the students' answers.

## **9. EVALUATION**

The course is evaluated on a three-year cycle. Students may be asked to evaluate the course by filling in a questionnaire containing specific questions about the course. The responses are processed by the Centre of Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning, which compiles a report summarising the strengths and weaknesses of the course. The feedback and issues arising from the evaluation are conveyed to the lecturer, who will then take appropriate action. Feedback will be given by the lecturer to the students regarding the results of the evaluation as well as the action taken.