

Comm 3402 CRIME IN THE NEWS MEDIA

SPRING 2026 #21676

Meeting Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Location: Journalism Building, Room 216

Course Zoom Link: TBA

Instructor: Dr. Felecia Jones Ross, Associate Professor

Office: 3110 Derby Hall

Office Hours: Mondays, 1 to 3 p.m.; Wednesdays, 9-11 a.m. via Zoom, or by appointment

Office hours Zoom link: 520 741 1812 Passcode: 440837

Email: ross.256@osu.edu In the subject line, please put AU2025 Crime Class

Note: My preferred method of communication for questions outside of class is email.

Class-wide communications will be sent through Announcements in CarmenCanvas.

Please check your notification preferences (go.osu.edu/canvas-notifications) to be sure you receive these messages.

I will reply to e-mails and messages in the discussion boards within 24 hours on school days.

I can be available to meet with you in person during office hours.

Course Description

In this course, we will examine the various media that we consume multiple times daily and how they present information about crime and the criminal justice system. How do various media outlets decide what cases to report? What types of crime cases tend to get attention and why? What role does the media play in educating the public about crime and the criminal justice system? What role should it play? To what extent is social media influencing the public's engagement with the media and criminal justice?

While the structure of this course requires students to work independently, every effort will be made to address the learning needs of each individual student.

Course activities listed in this syllabus are tentative. You will be informed in a timely manner of any changes.

Mode of Delivery

This class will meet in-person twice a week and conduct other activities using Carmen as a platform to review and submit assignments and take examinations. The class will begin meeting virtually toward the end of the semester likely after the second midterm examination tentatively scheduled for **April 9**. There may be other occasions that the

class will not meet in person. The professor will inform you of those occasions in a timely manner. All announcements pertaining to class policies, changes and any other relevant business will be placed on Carmen and announced in class. Pay close attention to the inclement weather policy on Page 11 of this syllabus.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will do the following:

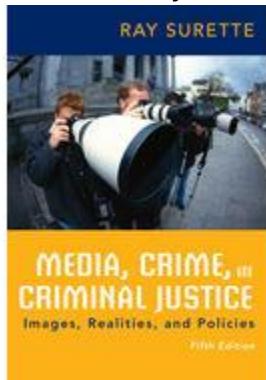
- Know the role the media plays in influencing our understanding of criminal justice and public safety
- Demonstrate the ability to challenge and change the performance of the media in its representation of crime and the criminal justice system
- Understand the realities of the criminal justice system
- Understand the realities of the media in its representation of the criminal justice system

Course Materials and Technologies

Recommended Text

- Surette, R. (2015). *Media, crime, and criminal justice: Images, realities, and policies* (5th Ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage

Note: You may use an e-version of the textbook if available. The ISBN is 978-1-285-45905-9



Other reading materials will be posted on Carmen and are listed at the end of this syllabus.

Required Equipment and Software

- Computer: current Mac (MacOs) or PC (Windows 10) with high-speed internet connection
- Webcam: built-in or external webcam, fully installed and tested
- Microphone: built-in laptop or tablet mic or external microphone
- Other: a mobile device (smartphone or tablet) to use for BuckeyePass authentication
- Microsoft Office 365: All Ohio State students are now eligible for free Microsoft Office 365. Full instructions for downloading and installation can be found at [Microsoft 365 Copilot](#).

Carmen Access

You will need to use BuckeyePass (buckeyepass.osu.edu) multi-factor authentication to access your courses in Carmen. To ensure that you are able to connect to Carmen at all times, it is recommended that you take the following steps:

- Register multiple devices in case something happens to your primary device. Visit the BuckeyePass - Adding a Device help article for step-by-step instructions (go.osu.edu/add-device).
- Request passcodes to keep as a backup authentication option. When you see the Duo login screen on your computer, click **Enter a Passcode** and then click the **Text me new codes** button that appears. This will text you ten passcodes good for 365 days that can each be used once.
- Download the Duo Mobile application (go.osu.edu/install-duo) to all of your registered devices for the ability to generate one-time codes in the event that you lose cell, data, or Wi-Fi service
- If none of these options meet the needs of your situation, you can **contact the IT Service Desk at 614-688-4357(HELP)** and IT support staff will work out a solution with you.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENT CATEGORIES

Following are the point values and/or percentages for each assignment:

Assignments	Percentage
Participation	10
Midterm examinations	40
Mini papers and online knowledge checks	10
Film analysis/review	14

Film analysis/review topic	1
Case analysis collaborative project	25

Description of Major Assignments

Participation and Attendance (10%)

Attendance, as well as your contributions to class discussions and activities will be factors in determining your participation grade. There may be unannounced quizzes. Your introduction, crime description, and the syllabus quiz are in this category. Attendance will be taken via Top Hat beginning with the **January 13 class**. This attendance will not count toward your participation grade. It will be used so that the professor can report to the registrar the names of enrolled students who have not attended or participated in class. Attendance will begin counting toward your participation grade on **January 22**. **The quiz, introduction and crime description assignments are due Jan. 16 but will close January 24.**

Mini Papers (10%)

The mini papers consist of two focused-writing papers that include describing and critiquing the media's treatment of a local case and of a national case. Each paper is due at designated times during the semester. More details will be provided and posted on Carmen. Deadlines are as follows: The local case assignment is due **Jan 23** and the national case assignment is due **Feb. 28**. Rubrics will be used for grading these assignments.

The online assignments are based on readings, videos and podcasts relevant to topics we will cover related to crime and the media. These assignments will likely require you to answer questions and/or post discussions in Carmen. Rubrics will be used for grading these assignments.

Film Analysis/ Review Topic (1%)

You are required to submit your topic for the film analysis/review for approval. Deadline is **Jan. 30**.

Film Analysis/Review (14%)

Write a 2-3-page review of a movie on a topic about some aspect of the criminal justice system. I must approve the topic. and an approval form will be posted on Carmen. Take a sophisticated position on the movie. In other words, do not just write that you thought it was good or bad. What was the movie's strengths/weaknesses with regard to helping us understand the criminal justice system? You are encouraged to interview anyone associated with making the movie or anyone who has knowledge about the criminal or justice-related issues that the movie portrayed. **Deadline is Feb. 13**. A rubric will be used for grading this assignment.

Case Analysis/Collaborative Project (25%)

The professor and/or Carmen will assign students to groups who will select and analyze a case involving the media and crime and make an asynchronous, multimedia presentation to the class. This assignment includes a presentation, discussions based on the presentations and reflections about the experience of working on this project. The reflections will be the last assignment for the semester. Each group must present a different case. The presentations will likely begin the week of **April 14**. The last day for submitting any aspect of this assignment (including revisions) is **May 4**.

Midterm Examinations (45%)

The midterm examinations will be based on reading materials and in class content that can include audiovisual presentations, guest speakers, lectures, and class discussions. There will be two midterm examinations, each of equal weight. The first midterm is tentatively scheduled for **Feb. 26**. and the second midterm is tentatively scheduled for **April 9**. Both examinations will be taken online using Honorlock and the Honorlock app. As in an in-person format, you will be given 85 minutes to complete it. Because you will be taking it at different locations that may have various technological issues, the exam will open at 12:01 a.m. and close at 11:59 p.m. on their designated days. The class will not meet on examination days. The second examination will not be cumulative.

Late Assignments

No assignments will be accepted late. This means a grade of zero for the missed assignment. Considerations will be given in instances when there are technical issues, documented extenuating circumstances, and illnesses. Note: You are responsible for making sure that your submissions go through correctly. Be careful not to submit assignments that are blank. You must inform the professor within seven days if such problems kept you from completing assignments on time. The deadlines for the syllabus quiz, introduction, and crime description assignments will be more flexible to allow for later enrollees. These assignments will close on **Jan. 24**.

Grading Scale

93–100, A; 90–92.9, A-; 87–89.9, B+; 83–86.9, B; 80–82.9, B-; 77–79.9, C+; 73–76.9, C; 70 –72.9, C-; 67 –69.9, D+; 60 –66.9, D; Below 60: E

Note: CarmenCanvas, Ohio State's learning management system, does not round fractions up. I do round fractions up in cases where students show significant participation and improvement over the semester. Please take that into account in computing grades.

Extra Credit

There will be opportunities for you to complete work for extra credit. You may earn up to **6 points** of extra credit that will be added to your examination scores. The extra credit can come from C-REP (Communication Research Experience Program) participation,

and/or from events/activities the professor will announce in advance. For non-C-REP activities, the professor will provide the requirements for earning the points. You are also encouraged to suggest ideas for extra credit. These ideas will be considered on the basis of their relevance to course goals and their accessibility to the whole class. See below for more details for earning C-REP credits.

C-REP (Communication Research Experience Program) Research Credits

Students who want to earn extra credit can participate in the Communication Research Experience Program (C-REP). C-REP is designed to give students direct exposure to the topics, goals, methods, and ethical issues of communication research. You can earn up to 6 points. Each hour of participation is worth 2 points of extra credit. The points will be added to your examination scores. Participation can take the form of:

- Participating in C-REP research studies, **OR**
- Completing C-REP alternative assignments, **OR**
- A combination of research studies and alternative assignments.

Completing your C-REP requirement must take place during the semester before the deadlines designated in the C-REP Student Guide. The C-REP Student Guide is posted on Carmen. If you have any questions, please review those materials.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's Code of Student Conduct, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's Code of Student Conduct and this syllabus may constitute Academic Misconduct.

The Ohio State University's Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University or subvert the educational process. Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized

collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's Code of Student Conduct is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University's Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity

There has been a significant increase in the popularity and availability of a variety of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT, Sudowrite, and others. These tools will help shape the future of work, research and technology, but when used in the wrong way, they can stand in conflict with academic integrity at Ohio State.

All students have important obligations under the Code of Student Conduct to complete all academic and scholarly activities with fairness and honesty. **Specifically, students are not to use unauthorized assistance on a course assignment unless such assistance has been authorized specifically by the instructor. In addition, students are not to submit their work without acknowledging any word-for-word use and/or paraphrasing of writing, ideas or other work that is not your own.** These requirements apply to all students in this class.

To maintain a culture of integrity and respect, **these generative AI tools should not be used in the completion of course assignments unless the instructor specifically authorizes their use, and then only in the ways allowed by the instructor.**

Content Warning

Some content in this course may involve media that may elicit a traumatic response in some students due to descriptions of and/or scenes depicting acts of violence, acts of war, or sexual violence and its aftermath. If needed, please take care of yourself while watching/reading this material (leaving classroom to take a water/bathroom break, debriefing with a friend, contacting a confidential Sexual Violence Advocate 614-267-7020, or Counseling and Consultation Services at 614-292-

5766 and contacting the instructor if needed). Expectations are that we all will be respectful of our classmates while consuming this media and that we will create a safe space for each other. Failure to show respect to each other may result in dismissal from the class.

Copyright

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing.

If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 by dialing 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Creating and Environment Free from Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a community to reflect diversity and to improve opportunities for all. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. Members of the university community also

have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Civil Rights Compliance Office:

Online reporting form at <http://civilrights.osu.edu/>,

Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605,

Or Email equity@osu.edu

The university is committed to stopping sexual misconduct, preventing its recurrence, eliminating any hostile environment, and remedying its discriminatory effects. All university employees have reporting responsibilities to the Civil Rights Compliance Office to ensure the university can take appropriate action:

- All university employees, except those exempted by legal privilege of confidentiality or expressly identified as a confidential reporter, have an obligation to report incidents of sexual assault immediately.
- The following employees have an obligation to report all other forms of sexual misconduct as soon as practicable but at most within five workdays of becoming aware of such information: 1. Any human resource professional (HRP); 2. Anyone who supervises faculty, staff, students, or volunteers; 3. Chair/director; and 4. Faculty member.

Disability Statement (with accommodations for Illness)

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.

If you are ill and need to miss class, including if you are staying home and away from others while experiencing symptoms of viral infection or fever, please let me know immediately. In cases where illness interacts with an underlying medical condition, please consult with Student Life Disability Services to request reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; or slds.osu.edu.

Grievances and Solving Problems

According to University Policies, if you have a problem with this class, you should seek to resolve the grievance concerning a grade or academic practice by speaking first with the instructor or professor. Then, if necessary, take your case to the department chairperson, college dean or associate dean, and to the provost, in that order. Specific procedures are outlined in Faculty Rule 3335-8-23. Grievances against graduate, research, and teaching assistants should be submitted first to the supervising instructor, then to the chairperson of the assistant's department.

Intellectual Diversity

Ohio State is committed to fostering a culture of open inquiry and intellectual diversity within the classroom. This course will cover a range of information and may include discussions or debates about controversial issues, beliefs, or policies. Any such discussions and debates are intended to support understanding of the approved curriculum and relevant course objectives rather than promote any specific point of view. Students will be assessed on principles applicable to the field of study and the content covered in the course. Preparing students for citizenship includes helping them develop critical thinking skills that will allow them to reach their own conclusions regarding complex or controversial matters.

In this course we will adhere to the 4Cs of civil discourse: **Be Curious, Be Charitable, Be conscientious, and Be constructive.** To acquaint yourself with this framework, please visit Ohio State's Center for Ethics and Human Values website: go.osu.edu/4Cs

Religious Accommodations

Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities.

Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement **and** the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the [Civil Rights Compliance Office](#).

Inclement Weather Policy

Should in-person classes be canceled, we will meet virtually via CarmenZoom during our regularly scheduled time. I will share any updates via CarmenCanvas, email or other mode of communication.

COURSE SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)

Week and Class Dates	Week Overview	Assignments
1 Jan. 13-16	Welcome and Introduction to crime and the media Surrette, Chapters 1-2 Explanation of mini paper assignments	Syllabus quiz and media crime description assignments (due Friday, 1/16, 11:59 p.m. EST; will close 1/24 11:59 p.m. EST) Discussion post introducing yourself (due Saturday, 1/17, 11:59 p.m. EST; will close 1/24 11:59 p.m. EST)

2 Jan. 20-23	Social Constructionism and Crime Portrayals Surrette, Chapters 2-3 Explain film review assignment	Introductions, media crime descriptions and syllabus quiz close (Saturday, 1/24, 11:59 p.m. EST) Submit local case mini-paper topic, Friday, 1/23, 11:59 p.m. EST Discussion Post: Why Should We Care About How the Media Represents Crime and Criminal Justice (due Saturday, 1/24, 11:59 p.m. EST)
3 Jan. 27-30	Crime Portrayals and Criminogenic Media Surrette, Chapters 3-4	Submit mini paper on local crime news and Film Review topic (Friday, 1/30, 11:59 p.m. EST) Discussion Post: Critiquing the True Crime Genre (due Saturday, 1/31, 11:59 p.m. EST)
4 Feb. 3-6	Criminogenic Media and Crimefighters Surrette, Chapters 4-5	Online assignment: View <i>Mean World Syndrome</i> and answer questions (due Friday, 2/6, 11:59 p.m. EST) Discussion Post: <i>Mean World Syndrome</i> (due Saturday, 2/7, 11:59 p.m. EST)
5 Feb. 10-13	Law, Order, and the CSI Effect Surrette, Chapter 5	Film Review is due Friday, 2/13, 11:59 p.m. EDT
6	Crime Fighters and Courts	

Feb. 17-20	<p>Surrette, Chapters 5-6</p> <p>Explain national case mini paper</p>	<p>Prepare for Midterm 1</p>
7 Feb. 24-27	<p>Crime Fighters and Courts (cont'd.)</p> <p>Midterm 1 Review and Midterm 1</p> <p>Midterm 1 is Feb. 26 (opens 12:01 a.m. and closes 11:59 p.m. EST; timed for 85 minutes)</p> <p>Class will not meet on Feb. 26</p>	<p>Submit national case mini paper (due Saturday, 2/28, 11:59 p.m. EST)</p>
8 March 3-6	<p>Corrections</p> <p>Surrette Chapter 7</p> <p>Explain case analysis project</p>	<p>Read and answer questions "A Rape on Campus," <i>Rolling Stone</i> and "Woman says Roy Moore initiated sexual encounter when she was 14, he was 32" (due Friday 3/5, 11:59 p.m. EST)</p> <p>Discussion Post: Based on "What Happened to Jackie" video. (due Saturday, 3/6, 11:59 p.m. EST)</p>
9 March 10-13	<p>Journalism Wrong and Right</p> <p>Covering sex crimes; trauma-informed</p>	<p>Submit Part 1: The Case Analysis Topic Proposal</p>

	<p>journalism</p> <p>Work on case analysis, assign groups; submit topics</p> <p>Possible guest speaker</p>	Due March 13, 11:59 p.m. EDT
10 March 17-20	SPRING BREAK NO CLASSES	No assignments
11 March 24-27	<p>Journalism Wrong and Right and Crime Control</p> <p>Surrette, Chapters 8-9</p> <p>Work on project</p>	<p>Case analysis check-in 1 and Discussion Post on episodic vs. thematic coverage</p> <p>Both are due Saturday, 3/28 11:59 p.m. EDT</p>
12 March 31- April 3	<p>Crime Control and Criminal Justice Policy</p> <p>Surrette, Chapters 9-10</p> <p>Work on project</p>	Prepare for Midterm 2
13 April 7-10	<p>New Media, Crime and the Future</p> <p>Surrette Chapters 10-11</p> <p>Review for Midterm 2; Midterm 2 is April 9; class will not meet</p>	Submit Part 2: The Case Itself April 11, 11:59 p.m. EDT
14 April 14-17 Begin virtual meetings	<p>Case Analyses Project</p> <p>Work on case analysis presentation drafts</p>	Submit presentation drafts, April 17, 11:59 p.m. EDT
15 April 21-24 Virtual meetings	<p>Case Analyses Project</p> <p>Begin group project presentations and assessments</p> <p>The last day of this class for the semester</p>	<p>Upload Part 3: The Presentation (Tuesday, 4/21, 11:59 p.m. EDT)</p> <p>Begin Part 4: The Discussion based on the presentations</p>

	is Thursday April 23	
16 April 27-May 1	<p>Semester Wrap Up</p> <p>Conclude group project presentations, discussions, reflections, check-ins and revisions</p> <p>Spring Semester Classes end for the university April 27</p>	<p>Submit Part 5: Case Analysis Reflections and all project items and revisions by May 4, 11:59 p.m. EDT)</p>