

**HISTORY 4410G**  
**Crime and Society in England, 1800-1900**  
**2026-27 | Fall 2026 | Winter 2027**  
Instructor: Professor Allyson N. May  
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*This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.*

### **Course Description**

This seminar explores nineteenth-century reform of the criminal law: the rise of modern policing and the transformation of both the criminal trial and punishment. It considers the impact of gender and class on definitions of crime and the treatment of offenders as well as the historiography of criminal justice.

### ***Prerequisite(s)***

Registration in third year or above, any module.

Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

### ***Antirequisite(s)***

History 4411E

### **Course Syllabus**

This seminar explores nineteenth-century reform of the criminal law: the rise of modern policing and the transformation of both the criminal trial and punishment. It considers the impact of gender and class on definitions of crime and the treatment of offenders as well as the historiography of criminal justice. It will also examine representations of crime, policing, trial, and punishment in the nineteenth-century press.

On completion of the course students will have

Developed an understanding of the ways in which criminal behaviour was conceptualized and categorized in nineteenth-century Britain.

Assessed the ways in which these new understandings influenced the theory and practice of punishment.

Become familiar with the history of British policing, both preventive and detective.

Explored crucial developments in the history of the criminal trial, including the presumption of innocence and the right to counsel.

### Methods of Evaluation

Students must complete all coursework. Failure to complete all assigned coursework will result in a failing grade.

#### Grading Scheme:

Seminar participation	30%
Article review (due 2 Feb.)	30%
Research essay (due 23 Mar.)	40%

The written assignments consist of a **1,200 word article review** and a **4,000 word research essay** that illuminates the history of policing, trial, or punishment. Students are responsible for choosing their own research topic, but that topic must be approved by the professor in advance of submission of the paper. Essays submitted without email approval of the topic will not be graded. You are expected to adhere to the specified word lengths for both the article review and research essay.

Due dates are not flexible: you are expected to meet deadlines. A late penalty of 2% per day, including weekends, will be levied on work submitted after the deadline without an extension. Late papers will also be graded without comment. Extensions **must** be applied for via Academic Counselling. Requests for extensions submitted after the due date will not be accepted.

Attendance in the seminar is mandatory: reading notes in lieu of participation will not be accepted. Students are expected to be present and to contribute regularly to discussion of assigned texts. Students who do not attend a minimum of 8 seminars out of 12 will fail the course.

### Course Materials

**Required text:** Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in England, 1750–1900*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 2018)

Available as an e-book: <https://www.routledge.com/Crime-and-Society-in-England-17501900/Emsley/p/book/9781138941762>

Additional readings will be identified in the seminar schedule, made available online, and assigned on a weekly basis.

## Course Schedule and Readings

**1 (5 Jan.) Introduction**

**2 (12 Jan.) The eighteenth-century criminal justice system: The ‘Bloody Code’**

Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in England, 1750-1900* (London, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 2018), chaps. 8 & 9

J.M. Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England, 1660-1800* (Princeton, 1986), chap. 2 (PDF)

**3 (19 Jan.) Resistance to reform**

Emsley, chap. 6

*Nineteenth-Century Crime and Punishment*, ed. Victor Bailey (London, 2021), introduction to vol. II: *Justice, Mercy and Death*, pp. 21-43

(All four volumes of this text are available online via Weldon, with unlimited access)

**4 (26 Jan.) Crime and criminals**

Emsley, chaps. 3, 6 & 7

*Nineteenth-Century Crime and Punishment*, introduction to vol. I: *Crime and Criminals*, pp. 21-45

*Students will also be assigned one of the following articles:*

Victor Bailey, ‘The Fabrication of Deviance: “Dangerous Classes” and “Criminal Classes” in Victorian England,’ in *Protest and Survival: The Historical Experience: Essays for E.P. Thompson*, ed. Robert Malcolmson and John Rule (London, 1994) (PDF) or

Rob Sindall, ‘Middle-Class Crime in Nineteenth-Century England,’ *Criminal Justice History* 4 (1983): 23-40 (PDF)

**5 (2 Feb.) Gender and crime**

Emsley, chap. 4

Carolyn Conley, *The Unwritten Law: Criminal Justice in Victorian Kent* (Oxford, 1991), chap. 3 (PDF)

***Article review due***

6 (9 Feb.) **Research essay sources discussion**

### READING WEEK

7 (23 Feb.) **The new police**

Emsley, chap. 9

Robert Storch, 'The Policeman as Domestic Missionary: Urban Discipline and Popular Culture in Northern England, 1850-1880,' *Journal of Social History* 9 (1976): 481-509 (PDF)

Michael Weaver, 'The New Science of Policing: Crime and the Birmingham Police Force, 1839-1842,' *Albion* 26(2) (1994): 289-308 (PDF)

8 (2 Mar.) **The criminal trial**

J.M. Beattie, 'Scales of Justice: Defense Counsel in the English Criminal Trial in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,' *Law and History Review* 9 (1991): 221-67 (PDF)

Allyson N. May, 'Garrow for the Prosecution', in *Law, Media, Emotion and the Self: Public Justice in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Katie Barclay and Amy Milka (London: Routledge, 2022) (PDF)

9 (9 Mar.) **The transformation of punishment: Transportation**

Bailey, *Nineteenth-Century Crime and Punishment*, introduction to vol. III: *Next Only to Death*, pp. 21-42

Alan Frost and Mollie Gillen, 'Botany Bay: An Imperial Venture of the 1780s', *English Historical Review* 100 (no. 395) (April 1985): 309-330 (PDF)

Emma Christopher and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, 'Convict transportation in global context, c. 1700-88', in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Cambridge, 2013) (PDF)

10 (16 Mar.) **The transformation of punishment: Imprisonment**

Emsley, chap. 10, plus one of:

Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England*, chap. 10 (PDF)

Bailey, *Nineteenth-Century Crime and Punishment*, introduction to vol. IV: *Prison and Prisoners*, pp. 21-40

Sean McConville, 'The Victorian Prison: England, 1865-1965,' *The Oxford History of the Prison*, ed. Norval Morris and David J. Rothman (Oxford, 1995) (PDF)

***Research essay due***

**11 (23 Mar.) Capital punishment in the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Simon Devereaux, *Execution, State, and Society in England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 2023), chaps. 8 & 9

<https://www-cambridge-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/core/books/execution-state-and-society-in-england-16601900/0D910C8737B752991DAFE30F70F22EEC>

**12 (30 Mar.) Ethnicity and crime**

[Readings TBA]

**13 (6 Apr.) Sherlock Holmes day 😊**

Everyone will have been assigned a Holmes story and we'll compare the fictional representation of crime and policing with the reality explored over the course.

**Additional Statements**

The best way to get in touch with me outside of the classroom is via email. I answer emails between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday. Please remember that office hours are not simply – or even primarily! – for dealing with problems. You are welcome to come and discuss course material in these hours. My office hours are held in-person.

You may use generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in this course for activities such as researching and refining your ideas, or drafting an outline to organize your thoughts—but not for generating prose. All writing submitted in this course must be your own. If in doubt, please ask me for clarification and advice.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.