

Seventh Edition

PRINCIPLES OF CRIMINAL LAW

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Brief Contents

PREFACE xiii

Chapter 1	Introduction to Criminal Law 1
Chapter 2	Criminal Liability 18
Chapter 3	Requirement of an Act 34
Chapter 4	Inchoate or Anticipatory Crimes 56
Chapter 5	Defenses 81
Chapter 6	Homicide 112
Chapter 7	Sex Crimes 140
Chapter 8	Crimes Against Persons 161
Chapter 9	Theft and Property Crimes 180
Chapter 10	Robbery, Extortion, and Bribery 195
Chapter 11	Crimes Against Habitation 213
Chapter 12	Crimes Against Public Morals 228
Chapter 13	Narcotics and Alcohol Crimes 241
Chapter 14	Crimes of Abuse 259
Chapter 15	White-Collar and Organized Crimes 275
Chapter 16	Punishments 285

APPENDIX 302

GLOSSARY 304

CASE INDEX 310

SUBJECT INDEX 314

Contents

PREFACE xiii

Chapter 1

Introduction to Criminal Law 1

Introduction 2

Origins of Criminal Law 3

Common Law 3

Development of Common Law 4

Principles of Criminal Responsibility 5

Morals Versus Law 6

Use of Sanctions to Regulate Morality and Societal Rules 6

Classification of Crimes 7

Substantive or Procedural Law 8

Felony or Misdemeanor 8

Administrative Crimes 9

Crimes and Torts Distinguished 10

Public and Private Laws and Wrongs 10

Case Law 10

Precedent 11

Stare Decisis 11

Statutory Law 11

Model Penal Code 12

Reform of Criminal Law 12

Police Powers of Government 13

Punishment 15

Summary 16 • Additional Assignments 16 • Review

Practicum 17 • Questions in Review 17 • Notes 17

Chapter 2

Criminal Liability 18

Introduction 19

Bill of Rights 19

Due Process 21

Eighth Amendment 22

Jurisdiction 23

Limits on Jurisdiction 24

Jurisdiction over the Person 24

State and Federal Jurisdiction 24

Venue 24

Social Harm 25

Right To Privacy 26

Legality 27

Equal Protection	29
Double Jeopardy	29
Doctrine of Merger	30
Summary	32 • Additional Assignments 33 • Review
Practicum	33 • Questions in Review 33 • Notes 33

Chapter 3

Requirement of an Act 34

Introduction 35

Act—Actus Reus 35

Voluntary Acts	36
Acts of Omission	36
Requirements of a Voluntary Act	37

Legal Duty 40

Intent—Mens Rea 42

General Intent	43
Specific Intent	43
Constructive Intent	44
Criminal Negligence	44
Transferred Intent	45
Strict Liability Crimes	45
General Requirements of Culpability	46

Joinder of Intent and Act 49

Causation 49

Presumptions 52

Summary	53 • Additional Assignments 54 • Questions in Review 54 • Notes 55
---------	--

Chapter 4

Inchoate or Anticipatory Crimes 56

Introduction 57

Solicitation 57

The Elements of Solicitation 60

The Intent That Another Party Commit a Crime	60
Asking, Encouraging, or Requesting Another to Commit a Crime	60
Special Problems in Solicitation	60
Double Jeopardy	61

Conspiracy 61

Penal Law of New York State, Section 105.00 Conspiracy in the Sixth Degree	61
Penal Law of New York State, Section 105.17 Conspiracy in the First Degree	61
Penal Law of New York State, Section 105.25 Conspiracy; Jurisdiction and Venue	62
Penal Law of New York State, Section 105.30 Conspiracy; No Defense	62
The Elements of Conspiracy	63
Special Problems in Conspiracy	65

Accomplices and Accessories 66

The Elements of the Crime of Accomplice	69
The Elements of the Crime of Accessory	70
Special Problems with Accomplices	70
Special Problems with Accessories	70
Summary of Accomplices and Accessories	70



Attempts 71

- The Elements of Attempt 73
- Special Problems in Attempt 74

Comparing Inchoate Crimes 76

- Attempt 76
- Solicitation 77
- Conspiracy 77
- Accomplices/Accessories 77

Multiple Convictions of Inchoate Crimes Related to the Same Crime 78

Summary 78 • Additional Assignments 79 •

Questions in Review 79 • Notes 79

Chapter 5

Defenses 81

Introduction 82

Criminal Responsibility 83

- Infancy 83
- Insanity 84
- Diminished Responsibility 88
- Diminished Responsibility under U.S. Insanity Defense Reform Act 89
- Intoxication 92
- Syndromes/Disorders 92

Justification and Excuse 94

- Self-Defense 95
- Defense of Others 97
- Defense of Property 98
- Duress 99
- Necessity 101
- Use of Force in Making Arrests 102
- Resisting Unlawful Arrest 103
- Mistake 104
- Consent 104
- Entrapment 104

Procedural Defenses 106

- Double Jeopardy 106
- Statute of Limitations 106

Selective Prosecution 108

Summary 109 • Additional Assignments 110 • Practicum 110 •

Questions in Review 110 • Notes 110

Chapter 6

Homicide 112

Murder 113

- Elements of Murder 114
- Degrees of Murder 118
- Serial Murderers 118

Felony Murder 121

- Elements of Felony Murder 121

Voluntary Manslaughter 126

- The Elements of Voluntary Manslaughter 126

Involuntary Manslaughter 130

- Elements of Involuntary Manslaughter 130



Negligent Manslaughter	131
Elements of Negligent Manslaughter	131
Special Problems in Homicide	133
Victim Must Be a Living Human Being	133
Death Must Occur within a Year and a Day	133
Suicide	133
Euthanasia	135
Comparing and Contrasting Homicides	136
Murder	136
Voluntary Manslaughter	136
Involuntary Manslaughter	136
Negligent Manslaughter	136
Summary	137 •
Additional Assignments	137 •
Practicum	137 •
Questions in Review	138 •
Notes	138

Chapter 7

Sex Crimes	140
Rape	141
Elements of Rape	142
Corroborative Evidence in Rape Cases	148
Summary of Rape	148
Sodomy and Oral Copulation	150
Elements of Sodomy	151
Oral Copulation	151
Summary of Sodomy and Oral Copulation	152
Other Sexual Acts And Offenses	152
Criminal Offenses	153
Other Sexual Behavior	154
Sexual Predator Statutes	155
Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act	156
Summary of Other Sexual Acts and Offenses	157
Sexual Assault	157
Summary	158 •
Additional Assignments	158 •
Practicum	159 •
Questions in Review	159 •
Notes	159

Chapter 8

Crimes Against Persons	161
Kidnapping	162
Types of Kidnapping	163
Kidnapping as a Federal Crime	165
False Imprisonment	165
Human Trafficking	166
Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000	167
Stalking	167
Extent of Stalking	169
High-Tech Stalkers	171
Cyberstalking	172
Assault and Battery	172
Battery	173
Assault	173



Aggravated Assault and Battery	174
Intent	174
Transferred Intent	175
Mayhem	175
Terrorism	176
Summary	178 • Additional Assignments 179 •
Practicum	179 • Questions in Review 179 • Notes 179

Chapter 9

Theft and Property Crimes 180

Larceny	181
Elements of Larceny	181
Degrees of Larceny	185
Larceny By Trick	185
False Pretenses	185
Embezzlement	186
Consolidation of Theft Offenses	188
Receiving Stolen Property	189
Forgery	190
Money Laundering	191
Counterfeiting	192
Identity Theft	193
Summary	193 • Additional Assignments 194 •
Practicum	194 • Questions in Review 194 • Notes 194

Chapter 10

Robbery, Extortion, and Bribery 195

Robbery	196
Elements of Robbery	197
Summary of Robbery	205
Extortion	205
Elements of Extortion	205
Summary of Extortion	208
Special Problems in Robbery and Extortion	208
Distinguishing Robbery from Extortion	208
Distinguishing Extortion from Other Theft Crimes	209
Bribery	209
Commercial Bribery	210
Summary	211 • Additional Assignments 212 •
Practicum	212 • Questions in Review 212 • Notes 212

Chapter 11

Crimes Against Habitation 213

Burglary	214
Elements of Burglary	215
Storage Container	217
Intent Requirement	219
Criminal Trespass	220
Arson	221
Elements of Arson	222
Scope of Arson	224



Special Problems in Crimes Against Habitation	224
Apprehension of the Offender	225
Arson and Interagency Cooperation	225
Summary	226 • Additional Assignments 226 •
Practicum	227 • Questions in Review 227 •
Notes	227

Chapter 12 Crimes Against Public Morals 228

Obscenity	229
Elements of Obscenity	230
Child Pornography	231
Summary of Obscenity	231
Prostitution	232
Summary of Prostitution	234
Incest, Bigamy, and Polygamy	235
Article I. Incest	235
Article II. Case on Point	235
Article III. Bigamy	235
Article IV. Polygamy	236
Games of Chance	236
Federal Gambling Laws	237
Internet Gambling	237
Public Corruption	238
Bribery	238
Summary	240 • Additional Assignments 240 •
Practicum	240 • Questions in Review 240 •
Notes	240

Chapter 13 Narcotics and Alcohol Crimes 241

Narcotic Offenses	242
Possession	244
Possession for Sale	246
Sale of a Controlled Substance	247
Medical Marijuana Laws	248
Alcohol Offenses	249
Alcohol Problem	249
Public Drunkenness	249
Driving Under the Influence	250
Solutions	253
International Agreements	253
Elimination and Reduction of Illicit Demand	253
Control of Supply	254
Suppression of Illicit International Trafficking	254
Prevention of Alcohol Abuse	255
Socialization Approaches	255
Social-Control Approaches	255
Summary	256 • Additional Assignments 257 •
Practicum	257 • Questions in Review 257 •
Notes	257



Chapter 14	Crimes of Abuse 259
	Child Abuse 260
	Physical Child Abuse 260
	Child Neglect 262
	Child Sexual Abuse 263
	Elder Abuse 264
	Definition 265
	Sexual Assault 266
	Other Violent Crimes 267
	Fraud 267
	Burglary 267
	Partner Abuse 267
	Definition 268
	Physical Abuse 270
	Sexual Abuse 271
	Emotional Abuse 271
	Summary 272 • Additional Assignments 272 •
	Practicum 273 • Questions in Review 273 •
	Notes 273
Chapter 15	White-Collar and Organized Crimes 275
	Introduction 275
	Defining White-Collar Crime 276
	Victims 277
	Prosecution 278
	White-Collar Crimes 279
	Corporate Fraud 279
	Ponzi Schemes 280
	Mortgage Fraud 280
	Intent 280
	RICO 281
	RICO in Action 281
	Summary 283 • Questions in Review 284 • Notes 284
Chapter 16	Punishments 285
	Introduction to Sentencing 286
	History 286
	Purpose 287
	Constitutional Issues 288
	Types of Sentences 291
	Indeterminate Sentences 292
	Determinate Sentences 293
	Presumptive Sentences 293
	Incarceration and its Alternatives 294
	Jails 294
	Prisons 294
	Probation and Parole 295
	Fines, Forfeitures, and Restitution 295



Capital Punishment 297

Constitutionality 298

Opponents and Advocates 299

Summary 300 • Additional Assignments 300 •

Practicum 301 • Questions in Review 301 •

Notes 301

APPENDIX 302

GLOSSARY 304

CASE INDEX 310

SUBJECT INDEX 314



Preface

The study of substantive criminal law is a study of human behavior. It is more than a study of specific crimes; it is also an examination of the rules of human behavior and criminal responsibility. Criminal law is based on moral values, and many of our crimes are also violations of our moral standards. The study of criminal law is controversial and exciting. For example, what subject is more controversial than the issue of whether abortion is the exercise of a woman's right to privacy or simply murder? As with many other criminal law issues, the answer to that question depends on one's values and beliefs. As for being exciting, notice how many of our movies and television programs are based on criminal behavior (e.g., *Criminal Minds*, *NCIS*, *Law and Order*, and *CSI*).

An important but seldom mentioned function of criminal law for social scientists is to define the subject matter of criminology. Criminology is the sociological and psychological study of the causes of crime, the control of crime, and the reasons for crime. Accordingly, defining certain acts as criminal and others as noncriminal directly affects the subject matter of criminology. As a comedian once stated, the only way to eliminate crime is to abolish our criminal laws—then there could be no crime.

Too often, books on general criminal law devote a considerable portion of the text to comparing majority and minority positions on specific issues. The result is that most readers are confused and lack a general understanding of settled concepts. For the most part, we have presented the prevailing positions with only an occasional reference to the majority–minority conflicts.

This book is designed as an introductory text on criminal law and not as a research book. Accordingly, to reduce its size and enhance its readability, endnotes are used sparingly in chapters involving noncontroversial subjects. The text presents basic concepts or principles of criminal law in definitions, focus boxes, and practicums. All these features are designed to assist the student in understanding this often-confusing area of the law.

We have chosen to present this material in a narrative form rather than approach it from a traditional law school casebook perspective. While we believe both techniques may be used to teach criminal law, our goal is to present a clear, concise text that discusses background information necessary to understand the principles involved in criminal law and sets forth the elements of the major crimes.

► New to the Seventh Edition

The seventh edition contains several significant changes. Those changes include the following:

- New material on organized and white-collar crimes
- Expanded discussions on criminal negligence, common inchoate crimes, solicitation crimes, the requirements of a voluntary act, the mens rea requirements, and accessories to crimes
- Discussion on legal duties imposed by law
- Expanded section on theft crimes
- Expanded section on criminal trespass
- Discussion on the changing laws regarding marijuana use



Comments, corrections, or suggestions for improvement of the text should be forwarded to Cliff Roberson at cliff.roberson@washburn.edu. Enjoy the fascinating world of criminal law.

► Instructor Supplements

Instructor’s Manual with Test Bank. Includes content outlines for classroom discussion, teaching suggestions, and answers to selected end-of-chapter questions from the text. This also contains a Word document version of the test bank.

TestGen. This computerized test generation system gives you maximum flexibility in creating and administering tests on paper, electronically, or online. It provides state-of-the-art features for viewing and editing test bank questions, dragging a selected question into a test you are creating, and printing sleek, formatted tests in a variety of layouts. Select test items from test banks included with TestGen for quick test creation, or write your own questions from scratch. TestGen’s random generator provides the option to display different text or calculated number values each time questions are used.

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► Alternate Versions

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Comments, suggestions, and recommendations on this text may be sent to the authors by emailing cliff.roberson@washburn.edu.

