

**Wrongful Convictions**  
**Writing for Sociology - SOCI 491.01**  
**Duration: Aug 27, 2019 - Dec 07, 2019**  
**T, Th: 12:30-1:50 pm**  
**JRH 205**  
**University of Montana**

**Professor: Larry Mansch**

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2 -3:30 pm

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This course will provide students with an overview of the issues and case law related to wrongful convictions. Students will gain an appreciation of the causes of wrongful convictions, to include eyewitness misidentification, police and prosecutorial misconduct, false confessions, incentivized “snitch” testimony, unvalidated or “junk” forensic science, and ineffective defense lawyering. Burdens of proof and judicial standards of examination, as set forth by statute and controlling case law, will be analyzed. Court decisions from both state and federal courts will be examined. An emphasis on legal writing will provide students with the opportunity to examine the issues and legal arguments of important case law, and construct legal memoranda in support of the parties’ positions.

**Course Structure and Policy**

Primarily, the course will be run in seminar and discussion format. However, there will also be debates, small group exercises and presentations, and training on fact investigation and research and writing memoranda. Extensive reading of case law and other materials is required.

**Attendance and Grading**

Attendance is mandatory in this course. Your grade will be based on your attendance and participation, your writing assignments, and the mid-term and final exams.

**Topics:**

**Introductions and Overview; Websites; Case briefing**

**Notorious Cases of Wrongful Convictions**

**Ineffective Assistance of Counsel**

**Prosecutorial Misconduct**  
**Snitches/Eyewitness Misidentification; False Confessions**  
**Forensic Evidence**  
**Infant Deaths**  
**The Science of DNA**  
**Compensation and Assimilation**