

# CJ 1330

## PLA Content Guide

### **Foundations of Criminal Law**

- Purpose and functions of criminal law in society
- Differences between criminal law and civil law
- Sources of criminal law: common law, statutes, constitutional law
- Classification of crimes: felonies, misdemeanors, and infractions
- Theories of punishment: deterrence, rehabilitation, retribution, incapacitation

### **Constitutional Limits on Criminal Law**

- Due process and equal protection clauses
- The principle of legality (“no crime without law”)
- Protections under the Bill of Rights (especially 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th, and 14th Amendments)

### **Elements of a Crime**

- Actus Reus
- Mens Rea
- Causation
- Strict liability offenses

### **Types of Crimes**

- Crimes against the person
- Crimes against property
- Crimes against public order and morality

### **Inchoate and Related Crimes**

- Attempt, solicitation, and conspiracy
- Accomplice liability and aiding and abetting

## **Defenses in Criminal Law**

- Justification defenses: self-defense, defense of others, necessity, duress
- Excuse defenses: insanity, mistake, entrapment
- Competency and criminal responsibility

## **Criminal Court System and Participants**

- Roles and motivations of key actors:
- Adversarial system basics
- Ethical duties of attorneys and judges

## **The Criminal Process**

- Steps from arrest to appeal
- Burdens of proof and evidentiary standards
- Jury selection and jury behavior
- Plea bargaining and its role in case resolution
- Sentencing goals and types (incarceration, probation, restitution, fines)
- Victims' rights and restorative justice