

### ☐ Review Sheet for “Crimes, Criminals, and Crime Statistics” Unit

---

#### **Instructions:**

- Review the main ideas from the unit in the text.
- Test your understanding by completing the questions. If you want help answering the questions, go to exercise 1, “The Concept of Crime,” and exercise 2, “Levels of Criminal Intent.”

### **Three Ways of Understanding Crime**

#### **Crime as natural law**

Ancient societies believed that the world was governed by a system of laws, including scientific and moral laws, that is the same in every society and culture. They believed that these fundamental laws which become the foundation for a criminal system were not created by human beings, but were the product of the natural world. Later natural law theorists believed that laws had religious origins, coming from God or some other religious power.

#### **Crime as social construct**

If people in society decide that certain behavior is wrong or unacceptable, they can criminalize that behavior; in other words, they will label the behavior as violating a law, or they will create a law to punish it. When crime is understood as a social construct, it is seen as the product of an agreement about a particular behavior, reached in a particular time between different groups of people in society, like the police, judges, lawyers, and law-makers, who are all usually acting to protect their interests.

#### **Crime as a legal construct**

This is the most common way of understanding crime. For crime to be understood as a legal construct, it must be connected with a particular legal code. An act can be considered a crime only after the criminal has been processed and convicted by the courts. According to this view, the criminal act must consist of two elements: the *actus reus* (the act itself) and *mens rea* (criminal intent). For a criminal to be held accountable for his actions he must be seen as committing the act voluntarily.

# E-RESOURCE CENTER

CRIMINAL JUSTICE 101

---

□ Review Sheet for "Crimes, Criminals, and Crime Statistics" Unit

**Give examples of three ancient attempts at codification of law:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**List the four levels of criminal intent (*mens rea*), from most to least culpable, and give definition of each:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.