

## **SYLLABUS**

CRIMINAL COURTS (CRIM 408, Section 001)  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
CRIMINOLOGY, LAW & SOCIETY  
FALL 2017

Instructor: Randy I. Bellows, Adjunct Professor  
Judge, Fairfax Circuit Court  
Contact: 571-283-3721  
Email: rbellow@gmu.edu  
Class Schedule: Tuesdays from 7:20 PM to 10 PM  
Classroom: David King Hall 2053

### **COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Criminal cases are in the news every day and the outcome of criminal trials often have profound consequences, not only for the actual participants but for society in general. Whether you are considering a career in criminal justice or are simply seeking a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of our criminal justice system, an understanding of how our courts operate in criminal cases is critical. Once an arrest is made, it is our criminal courts that determine whether justice is achieved.

The goals of this course are four-fold. The first goal is to give students an overview of the structure of our criminal court institutions: state and federal criminal courts, juvenile courts, and appellate courts. The second goal is to give students an understanding of how the criminal justice system operates at each stage of a criminal proceeding, from the initial processing of an arrestee, to pre-trial suppression motions, to the trial itself before either a judge or jury, to the sentencing hearing, and to post-conviction appeals. We will not only cover the key terminology commonly used in criminal courts but focus on the critical events in the life of a criminal case that will largely determine its outcome. The third goal is to give students an appreciation of the strengths and frailties of our criminal courts, with particular focus on the ultimate question of how well our courts achieve justice. Are the guilty usually convicted? How frequently do innocent persons get convicted? What are the goals of sentencing and are they actually achieved? What are the differing perceptions of defendants, victims and witnesses? The final goal is to give students an understanding of the roles played by each of the five key players who work in the criminal courts: prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, jurors, and probation officers. What are their strengths, weaknesses and special challenges? What changes might make these individuals more effective in the performance of their duties?

At the completion of this course, you should have a solid grounding in the structure and operation of our criminal courts. This should be helpful in deciding what role you might wish to play in the criminal justice system and in exercising your own responsibility as a member of a community committed to the rule of law.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:** America's Courts and the Criminal Justice System, **12<sup>th</sup> Edition**

ISBN 10: 1-305-26105-4

ISBN 13: 978-1-305-26105-1

Authors: David W. Neubauer and Henry F. Fradella

Publisher: Cengage Learning

You can obtain a hard copy or digital e-book version of the textbook, whichever works best for you.

### **ATTENDANCE**

As is stated in George Mason University's Attendance Policy, "Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation." Here are some specifics:

- I expect you to attend class and to actively participate in class discussions.
- Arriving late or leaving early is very disruptive. I realize that there are times when this may be unavoidable but chronic tardiness or repeatedly leaving early will affect your participation grade.
- 15% of your final grade will be based on class participation. What determines excellence in class participation? (1) regular on-time class attendance; (2) volunteering answers to questions posed; (3) asking questions pertinent to the readings, lectures and discussions; and (4) demonstrating that you have read the assigned readings if called upon. The assignment of a grade for class participation is solely in the instructor's discretion.
- I expect you to keep up with the assigned readings. I will not use class lectures to simply repeat what is in the textbook. Rather, class lectures will use the textbook as a starting point to explore various topics in greater depth. Attendance is vitally important in order for you to understand the course and be prepared for the examinations.

## GRADING

The possible grades and associated points are as follows:

A+	97-100
A	94-96
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D	65-69
F	Below 64

Your grade will have five components:

1. Class Attendance & Participation: 15%
2. Court Observation & Paper: 10%
3. Exam 1: 25%
4. Exam 2: 25%
5. Final Exam: 25%

**IN ADDITION, THERE WILL BE ONE EXTRA CREDIT PROJECT THAT CAN RAISE YOUR FINAL GRADE UP TO FIVE POINTS.**

Additional notes on grading:

- **Exam 1: September 26, 2017 (Covering Weeks 1-4 and Chapters 1-6)**
- **Exam 2: November 7, 2017 (Covering Weeks 5-9 and Chapter 7-11)**
- **Final Exam: December 19, 2017 (Covering Weeks 10-14 and Chapters 12-17) (7:30 PM TO 10:15 PM)**
- Exam 1 and 2 will be given in class, during the last hour of class.
- Exam 1 and 2 and the Final Exam will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions.
- All three of the exams will be closed book. In other words, you must not use textbooks, other reference material, or your notes. You must rely solely on your own memory and reasoning ability.
- You will need to bring Scantron testing cards to each exam, including the Final Exam. The Scantron testing card is 882-E and they are available for purchase at the GMU Bookstore (dark green, 6-pack for \$1.98).
- Makeup exams will be allowed only when the student provides written verification of personal or family illness or an emergency that prevents you from taking the exam as scheduled.

## **COURT OBSERVATION & PAPER**

To fully understand the criminal justice system, and the role of criminal courts, it is important that you spend some time actually observing criminal proceedings. Therefore, each student is required to observe proceedings for at least three hours and answer a series of questions about your observations. The Fairfax Courthouse is located within walking distance of GMU and, on any given day, there are multiple criminal proceedings taking place. Depending on the day, this may include traffic proceedings, misdemeanor bench trials, felony jury trials, and guilty pleas. You do not need to stay in the same courtroom for the whole three hours; rather, you can spend some time in several different courtrooms. You may also do your observation in any of the other local courthouses (e.g., Arlington, Alexandria, Loudoun).

Here is some advice if you choose to do your observations at the Fairfax Circuit Court or Fairfax General District Court. Both courts are located in the Fairfax Courthouse, which is at 4110 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax, Va. The General District Court, which handles a variety of criminal and traffic matters – including misdemeanors, preliminary hearings on felony cases, bond motions, and traffic cases – is located on the First and Second Floor. The Circuit Court, which handles felony jury trials, criminal pleas, and misdemeanors that are appealed from the General District Court, is located on the Fourth and Fifth Floor of the Courthouse. The best time to arrive at the Courthouse is around 10 a.m. You can go to the Courthouse any weekday. In the Circuit Court, felony jury trials are generally held only on Monday through Thursday. On Fridays, there will be four to five Circuit Court judges with either a sentencing/revocation docket or criminal motions.

The questions you are to answer are as follows:

- Date of your observation.
- Court location (Example: Fairfax, Arlington, Alexandria).
- Courtroom(s) attended (Example: Courtroom 4G, Fairfax Circuit Court).
- Nature of proceedings (e.g., traffic, misdemeanor trial, felony trial, jury or judge trial, suppression motion, guilty pleas, sentencings).
- Generally describe the proceedings and the issues before the court and/or jury.
- What did you observe that illustrated some of the problems which we have identified in the criminal justice system and criminal courts?
- What did you observe that was consistent with what you expected to observe from the readings and lectures regarding criminal

- courts and criminal procedure?
- What did you observe that was different than what you expected to observe from the readings and lectures regarding criminal courts and procedure?

All papers must be double-spaced and typed in 12-point type, and should be 2-3 pages.

### **EXTRA CREDIT PROJECT**

The extra credit project can add up to five points to your final grade. The project is to read one non-fiction book about a criminal trial and write a short paper that answers the following questions:

1. Description of the trial: location, court system, name of victim or victims, name of defendant or defendants, crime charged, and name of prosecutor, defense attorney and judge.
2. What was the prosecutor's theory of the case?
3. What was the defendant's defense? (Example: insanity, self-defense, misidentification)
4. What was the outcome? Do you agree or disagree with the outcome, and why?
5. What was the key evidence that either led to the defendant's conviction or to the defendant's acquittal?
6. If you had been the prosecutor or the defense attorney, what would you have done differently?
7. Was the criminal justice system, as depicted in the book, fair and just to both the defendant and the prosecution?
8. Has reading the book made you more interested or less interested in working in the criminal justice system?

I must approve the book you select, so let me know as soon as you decide on the book you would like to read. The book must be one that you have not previously read.

The deadline for turning in this extra credit project is **NOVEMBER 21, 2017**. All papers must be double-spaced and typed in 12-point type, and should be 2-3 pages. Late submissions will not be accepted.

## **OFFICE HOURS**

I am available to meet with you by appointment, and will try to schedule the appointments before or after class. The best way to schedule an appointment is by emailing me. I will do my best to get back to you the same day.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Students may use computers, ipads, tablets, etc., in the classroom, but only for the purpose of taking notes or accessing course material. No audio or video recording. Please insure that your cell phones do not ring during class.

## **CLASS AGENDA**

Note: I reserve the right, if it becomes necessary, to alter the agenda, including the exam dates. For example, class assignments or subject matters to be discussed may need to be adjusted if inclement weather requires a class to be cancelled.

### **WEEK 1** (August 29)

Course Introduction

Criminal Courts: An Overview

Readings: Chapter 1

### **WEEK 2** (September 5)

Law and Crime

Federal Courts and Criminal Law Enforcement

Readings: Chapter 2 and 3

### **WEEK 3** (September 12)

State Courts and Criminal Law Enforcement

Dynamics of Courthouse Justice

Readings: Chapter 4 and 5

### **WEEK 4** (September 19)

The Prosecutor

Readings: Chapter 6

Guest Speaker: Current Prosecutor

**WEEK 5** (September 26)

The Defense Attorney

Readings: Chapter 7

Guest Speaker: Current Public Defender

**Exam 1 (Covering Weeks 1-4 and Chapters 1-6)**

**WEEK 6** (October 3)

The Judge

Readings: Chapter 8

**NO CLASS ON OCTOBER 10**

**WEEK 7** (October 17)

Defendants, Victims and Witnesses

Readings: Chapter 9

**COURTROOM OBSERVATION PAPER DUE TODAY**

**WEEK 8** (October 24)

Arrest, Bail, and Arraignment

Readings: Chapter 10

**WEEK 9** (October 31)

Disclosing and Suppressing Evidence

Chapter 11

**WEEK 10** (November 7)

Plea Bargaining and Guilty Pleas

Chapter 12

**Exam 2 (Covering Weeks 5-9 and Chapter 7-11)**

**WEEK 11** (November 14)

Trials and Juries

Readings: Chapter 13

**WEEK 12** (November 21)

Sentencing Options and Sentencing Decisions

Readings: Chapter 14 and 15

**EXTRA CREDIT PAPER DUE TODAY**

**WEEK 13** (November 28)  
Appeals and Habeas Corpus  
Readings: Chapter 16

**WEEK 14** (December 5)  
Juvenile Court  
Readings: Chapter 17

**FINAL EXAM: December 19, 2017 (7:30 PM TO 10:15 PM)**  
**(Covering Weeks 10-14 and Chapters 12-17)**

### **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

#### **Campus On-Line Resources**

Student Support: <http://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus/>

General University Information/Weather: [www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu)

Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

Counseling and Psychological Services: <http://caps.gmu.edu>

University Catalog: <http://catalog.gmu.edu>

University Policies: <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu>

#### **Mason Diversity Statement**

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth.

An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.

The reflection of Mason's commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond



policies and procedures to focus on behavior at the individual, group and organizational level. The implementation of this commitment to diversity and inclusion is found in all settings, including individual work units and groups, student organizations and groups, and classroom settings; it is also found with the delivery of services and activities, including, but not limited to, curriculum, teaching, events, advising, research, service and community outreach.

Acknowledging that the attainment of diversity and inclusion are dynamic and continuous processes, and that the larger societal setting has an evolving socio-cultural understanding of diversity and inclusion, Mason seeks to continuously improve its environment. To this end, the University promotes continuous monitoring and self-assessment regarding diversity. The aim is to incorporate diversity and inclusion within the philosophies and actions of the individual, group and organization, and to make improvements as needed.

### Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and also contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through this office.

### Honor Code Policy

George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity ([oai.gmu.edu](http://oai.gmu.edu)). See this excerpt from [oai.gmu.edu](http://oai.gmu.edu):

“The Honor Code at George Mason University shall be specifically concerned with cheating or attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing in the academic setting. Examples of these infractions include but are not limited to the following:

1. Use of unauthorized material.
2. Use of unauthorized assistance.
3. Duplicate use of student’s prior work.
4. Violation of syllabus requirements regarding integrity.
5. Self-plagiarism.
6. Inadequate citation.
7. False citation.
8. Failure to adhere to citation forms set by the professor.
9. Failure to quote sources/material.

10. Submission of another individual's work.
11. Removing an exam from a classroom.
12. Posting or enabling of posting of homework assignments and/or exams or solutions on websites.
13. Taking photos of exams/academic work without authorization.
14. Taking someone else's work without knowledge.
15. Falsifying sources, data, or information.
16. Providing a false excuse for missing a test or class.
17. Providing false information, including identifying information.
18. Falsifying official correspondence."

More detailed information is available at [oai.gmu.edu](http://oai.gmu.edu).

#### Enrollment Statement

- Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class.
- Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. (Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's Website at [registrar.gmu.edu](http://registrar.gmu.edu).)
- Last Day to Add Classes: **September 5, 2017**
- Last Day to Drop Classes with no tuition penalty: **September 5, 2017**
- Last Day to Drop Classes with 33% tuition penalty: **September 19, 2017**
- Last Day to Drop Classes with 67% tuition penalty: **September 29, 2017**
- After the last day to drop classes, a class can be dropped by using the selective withdrawal option, but only three selective withdrawals are allowed throughout your studies at Mason. The selective withdrawal period is **October 2-27, 2017**. Any other withdrawal must be with the approval of the dean and will only be allowed for nonacademic reasons.