

CRIMINAL TRIAL PRACTICE

Spring 2026

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COURSE MEETING TIMES AND LOCATION:

Thursdays: 6:30 p.m. to 9:20 p.m.
Location: Mock Trial Courtroom

OFFICE HOURS:

By appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will teach you the components of a criminal trial and you will conduct a criminal jury trial.

WESTERN STATE COLLEGE OF LAW – PROGRAMMATIC LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Western State College of Law's curriculum is designed so that every student achieves a level of competency prior to graduation in each of the eight Programmatic Learning Outcomes listed below:

(1) Doctrinal Knowledge

Students will demonstrate knowledge of substantive and procedural law in the core curriculum subjects, including Contracts, Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, Torts, Real Property, Business Association, Evidence, Civil Procedures, Constitutional Law, Estates, Community Property, Remedies, and Professional Responsibility.

(2) Practice Skills

Students will demonstrate the development of other law practice skills. Each student's chosen outcomes within this category will be varied based on the student's particular interests, coursework, and work experiences. They may include, but are not limited to, the following topics: oral presentation and advocacy; interviewing; counseling; client service and business development; negotiations, mediation, arbitration, or other alternate dispute resolution methods; advanced legal research and writing (excluding purely academic papers and the first four units earned in introductory first-year legal research and writing class); applied legal writing such as drafting contracts, pleadings, other legal instruments; law practice management or the

use of technology in law practice; cultural competency; collaboration or project management; financial analysis, such as accounting, budgeting project management, and valuation; cost benefit analysis in administrative agencies; use of technology, data analyses, or predictive coding; business strategy and behavior; pre-trial preparation, fact investigation, such as discovery, e-discovery, motion practice, assessing evidence, or utilizing experts; trial practice; professional civility and applied ethics; a law clinic that includes a classroom component; or a legal externship that includes a classroom component.

(3) Legal Analysis

Students will demonstrate the ability to identify the factual and legal issues implicated by a fact pattern and to appropriately use cases (including identifying the salient features of an appropriate precedent case, identifying legally significant similarities or differences between the precedent case and a fact pattern and explaining why those are legally significant) and rules (including the ability to connect legally significant facts in a fact pattern to the rule) to predict how a court would decide the issue. Students will also demonstrate the ability to identify and evaluate the public policies of a precedent case or rule, and be able to evaluate how public policy can impact the application of a rule to the legal issue.

(4) Legal Research

Students will demonstrate the ability to locate relevant legal authority using a variety of book and electronic resources, and to properly cite to such legal authority.

(5) Communication

Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate both orally and in writing in a manner appropriate to a particular task to effectively convey the author or speaker's ideas. This includes audience sensitivity in written and oral communication (the ability to adopt a tone, style and level of detail appropriate to the needs, knowledge and expertise of the audience); and written communication basic proficiency (the ability to use the conventions of grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction and usage appropriate to the task and sufficient to convey effectively the author's ideas).

(6) Advocacy of Legal Argument

Students will demonstrate the ability, in both oral and written formats, to evaluate the legal, economic, and social strengths and weaknesses of a case and use case and statutory authority as well as public policy to persuade others. Making policy-based arguments includes the ability to identify and evaluate the public policies of a precedent case or rule and their implications, and be able to assert such appropriate arguments to support a particular application or distinction of a precedent case to a legal controversy or a particular resolution of the application of a rule to the legal controversy.

(7) Client Sensitivity and Cultural Competency

Students will demonstrate an awareness of clients' needs and goals, including a sensitivity to clients' background and circumstances (including, but not limited to, socio-economic, gender, race, ethnicity, educational, disability and/or religious background(s)), the ability to make decisions that reflect an appropriate focus on those needs and goals, and awareness that cultural issues may affect the relevance of facts and application of the law.

(8) Legal Ethics

Students will demonstrate the ability to identify ethical issues in law practice contexts and make appropriate decisions to resolve such issues.

COURSE LEARNING GOALS:

Upon successful completion of the course, you should expect to achieve a level of competency in each of the following areas:

- (1) Knowledge and practical application of Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure.
- (2) Oral presentation and advocacy, pre-trial preparation, fact investigation, assessing evidence, utilizing experts, trial practice, professional civility, and applied ethics.
- (3) The ability to identify the factual and legal issues implicated by a fact pattern for a criminal trial.
- (4) The ability to locate and cite relevant legal authorities during a criminal trial.
- (5) The ability to effectively communicate both orally and in writing to a judge and jury during a criminal trial, including the ability to adopt a tone, style, and level of detail appropriate to the needs, knowledge and expertise of the judge and jury.
- (6) Developing a sensitivity to clients', judges' and jurors' backgrounds and circumstances (including, but not limited to, socio-economic, gender, race, ethnicity, educational, disability and/or religious backgrounds), and the ability to tailor communications to clients, judges and jurors that reflect an appropriate focus on those backgrounds and circumstances.
- (7) The ability to identify ethical issues in criminal matters and make appropriate decisions to resolve those issues.

REQUIRED RESOURCES:

Optional Reading Materials: *Trial Techniques and Trials*, 12th Edition by Thomas A. Mauet and Stephen D. Easton, and published by Aspen Publishing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attendance and Class Participation – You are expected to come to class each night prepared to participate in the class exercises. For this reason, attendance is mandatory. Students who miss more than four class sessions are subject to administrative dismissal from the course per the WSCL Attendance Policy (reprinted in the Student Handbook). Please note that just because you can miss four classes without being dismissed does not mean that you should miss four classes.

2. Preparation for Class – **Students should expect to spend at least six hours per week on preparation for class exercises.**
3. Final Exam – There will not be a written final exam. Your course grade will be made up of your participation in class discussions, participation in class exercises, and your performance during the final mock criminal trial.

COURSE GRADE:

Your final grade will be made up of the following:

1. Your participation in class discussions. In each class, you should expect to be called upon to lead the discussion on one or more of the topics for the class each week, and to answer questions posed by the professor and other students.
2. Your participation in class exercises. In each class, you should expect to participate in class exercises in the role of an attorney, a witness, or a juror. Your grade will be dependent on the quality of your preparation and participation for each role in the class exercises. In each of these roles, you will be expected to openly communicate with your classmates and, frequently stand in front of your classmates and perform various tasks (e.g., opening statements, direct examination, cross examination and closing arguments).
3. Your overall performance during the final mock criminal trial.
4. No individualized "extra-credit" work will be permitted.

DISABILITY SERVICES STATEMENT:

Western State College of Law provides accommodations to qualified students with disabilities. The Disabilities Services Office assists qualified students with disabilities in acquiring reasonable and appropriate accommodations and in supporting equal access to services, programs, and activities at Western State College of Law.

To seek reasonable accommodations, a student must contact Senior Assistant Dean Donna Espinoza, Student Services Director and Disabilities Services Coordinator, whose office is in the Library Building, Room 275-B. Dean Espinoza's phone number and email address are: (714)459-1117; despinoza@wsulaw.edu. When seeking accommodations, a student should notify Dean Espinoza of her or his specific limitations and, if known, her or his specific requested accommodations. Students who seek accommodations will be asked to supply medical documentation of the need for accommodation. Classroom accommodations are not retroactive but are effective only upon the student sharing approved accommodations with the instructor or professor. Therefore, students are encouraged to request accommodations as early as feasible with Dean Espinoza to allow for time to gather necessary documentation. If you have a concern or complaint in this regard, please notify Dean Espinoza; or please notify Dean Marisa Cianciarulo at mcianciarulo@wsulaw.edu or (714)459-1168. Complaints will be handled in accordance with the College of Law's "Policy against Discrimination and Harassment."

COURSE SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS:

CLASS/DATE	TOPIC	READING ASSIGNMENT (for the following week)
1. January 15, 2026	Advocating / Illuminating Case Selection The Trial Process Jury Selection	Chapter 1, pp. 1-11 Chapter 3, pp. 31-72
2. January 22, 2026	Jury Selection Psychology of Persuasion Closing Arguments	Chapter 2, pp. 13-30 Chapter 9, pp. 446-498
3. January 29, 2026	Closing Arguments (Part I) Opening Statements	
4. February 5, 2026	Closing Arguments (Part II) Opening Statements	Chapter 4, pp. 73-107
5. February 12, 2026	Opening Statements with Themes Direct Examination -Lay Witnesses -Objections In General -Objections Before Testimony -Objections to Testimony	Chapter 5, pp. 109-198 Chapter 10, pp. 499-512 Chapter 10, pp. 512-513 Chapter 10, pp. 513-541
6. February 19, 2026	Opening Statements with Themes Cross Examination (Lay Witness) Cross Examination (Experts) Exhibits and Visual Aids -Objections to Exhibits	Chapter 6, pp. 199-270 Chapter 8, pp. 381-435 Chapter 7, pp. 271-379 Chapter 10, pp. 541-546
7. February 26, 2026	Direct and Cross Examinations with Exhibits and Objections	
8. March 05, 2026	Direct and Cross Examinations with Exhibits and Objections Jury Instructions and Verdict forms	Chapter 9, pp. 443-446
9. March 12, 2026	SEMESTER BREAK	

10. March 19, 2026	Jury Instructions	
11. March 26, 2026	Closing Arguments (Part I)	
12. April 2, 2026	Closing Arguments (Part II)	
13. April 09, 2026	“Final Trial” Review	
14. April 16, 2026	Final Trial	
15. April 23, 2026	Final Trial	