

Trial Practice - Criminal

Fall 2025

Instructor information

Instructor	Email	Office location & hours
Commissioner Joe Dane	jdane@wsulaw.edu	By appointment

General information

Description

This course will learn and analyze the components of a jury trial and prepare the students to conduct a criminal jury trial.

Learning Goals and 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; 2 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 effectively convey 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.

WESTCLIFF UNIVERSITY - INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES:

(1) Analytical Reasoning Analyze issues objectively, interpret and synthesize data and ideas, and develop feasible, flexible, and creative solutions to real world problems.

(2) Effective Communication Identify audiences, assess information provided, interpret needs, and present relevant information using appropriate written, oral, and listening skills and media to meet the needs of the situation.

(3) Information Competency Gather, evaluate, and ethically use information from a variety of relevant technological and library resources to make decisions and take action.

(4) Interpersonal Effectiveness Develop individual and group interpersonal skills to improve and foster participation and interaction critical for achieving individual and group goals.

(5) Personal and Professional Integrity and Ethical Behavior Demonstrate a multi-dimensional awareness of individual and social responsibility to act ethically and with integrity in a diverse, global society.

(6) Professional Competence Apply skills appropriate to program objectives and employ critical reasoning to contribute to one's field and profession

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) Develop 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 jury trials and make appropriate decisions to resolve those issues.

Required text

Trial Techniques and Trials, 10th Edition by Thomas A. Mauet, Walters Kluwer Law and Business Publishing Company

Course requirements

1. Attendance and Class Participation - You are expected to come to class each night prepared to discuss the assigned readings and participate in class exercises. For this reason, attendance is mandatory. Only one (1) unexcused absence will be tolerated. Two or more unexcused absences may result in a student receiving a failing grade in the course. Three absences of any kind will result in a failing grade per school policy.
2. Reading Assignments and Preparation for Class - Unless otherwise specifically assigned, reading assignments are taken from the required resources specified above. The reading assignments listed for each class are those readings which a student must complete before the class to be prepared for class that week. Students should expect to spend at least six hours per week on assigned reading and 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 and performance during the final mock 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 readings 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 and 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, at times, 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.
5. This course does involve lecture as well as in-class live presentations by the students. Students will be expected to stand in front of class and perform opening statements, direct and cross-examination of witnesses, and closing arguments. A failure to perform can result in a failing grade.

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 Students Services Suite. 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

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading Assignment & In-Class Exercises</u>
8/14/25	Introduction, review of trial process, thinking like a trial lawyer	None
8/21/25	The psychology of persuasion; jury selection	Ch 2, pp 13-27 Ch 3, pp 31-73 Ex: Jury selection profile & Qs
8/28/25	Opening statements	Ch 4, pp73-107 Ex: Opening statement
9/4/25	Opening statements (cont'd.)	Ex: Opening statement (continue/revised)
9/11/25	Direct Examination Lay Witnesses Objections	Ch 5, pp 109-197 Ch 10, pp497-539 Ex: Direct exam outline/bullet points/Qs Common objections/responses
9/18/25	Direct Examination Exhibits & Visual Aids Objections	Ch 7, pp 271-378 Ch 10, pp 539-544 (sect. 10.7) Ex: Laying foundation Qs and exercises with exhibits
9/25/25	Cross Examination	Ch 6, pp 199-268 Ex: prep for cross exam (outline/bullet points/Qs/topics)
10/2/25	Direct & Cross Examinations	Exercises
10/9/25	Expert Witnesses	Ch 8, pp 379-433 Ex: foundation Qs, testimony and hypos of expert
10/16/25	Jury Instructions	Ch 9, pp 441-444 (sect. 9.4) CALCRIM materials Prep: Thinking week - how do you argue the law
10/23/25 - Fall Break - No Class		
10/30/25	Closing Argument	Ch 9, pp 435-441; 445-495 Ex: Closing argument

11/6/25	Closing Argument (cont'd)	Continue/revise
11/13/25	Final Mock Trial (opening, Prosecution case in chief)	
11/20/25	Final Mock Trial (Defense case in chief, closing arguments)	
	Final debriefing	

No further class sessions during reading week and conventional final weeks.