GVPT319L: Trial Advocacy
Fall 2016

Instructor: James Trusty
Email: jamestrusty@verizon.net
Meeting Time: Wednesdays, 6:30-9:00 p.m.
Classroom: TBA

COURSE INFORMATION

There is no textbook for this course. There will be regular readings that will be provided in advance of class. Most of these readings will be added to ELMS periodically to prepare you for class discussion, and occasionally we will read and analyze/utilize written materials in the classroom. Students will be given at least a few days’ notice when readings are added.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is devoted to exploring and developing courtroom litigation skills, with an emphasis on criminal trials. Consequently, you will learn and utilize the basic evidentiary rules that govern the use of evidence, its admissibility, and the
manner in which criminal trials are conducted. This course will familiarize you with basic concepts of courtroom litigation strategies and tactics, as well as some substantive areas of law such as criminal law, torts, and contract law.

By the end of this course, students will have been exposed to many of the legal concepts that one encounters in law school and in the practice of law. The focus in this course is on litigation, a concept which relates to the filing of cases in the court system and to the subsequent adversarial proceedings that occur between the parties and that ultimately are resolved by judges or jurors. The vast majority of law school courses, including most traditional 1st-year classes, implicate legal principles related to litigation. Even for those students who are not planning on pursuing further legal education after college, this course will provide a valuable introduction to law and litigation. Future political scientists, historians, public speakers, as well as persons with ambitions to go into government careers or policy work in the private sector will benefit from the course, considering how pervasive law and litigation are in our society.

The course is structured in three part. Part I will provide a basic introduction to litigation and legal advocacy in the United States. Part II will include a survey of the primary types of law – including constitutional law, case law (also called “common law”), statutory law, and legal ethics governing judges and lawyers. Just like law students, who are taught using the “case method,” students in this course will read actual decisions by courts in order to elucidate relevant points. Part III, which will be the lengthiest component of the course, will involve legal advocacy, primarily oral but limited aspects of written advocacy, at the trial court level. Students will engage in oral advocacy exercises in which they use what they have learned throughout the course in an experiential context.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

For this course, students will be expected to attend all class sessions and actively participate. There are several additional requirements that must be fulfilled to be successful in this course.

Course Participation:
Course Lectures and Readings and Quizzes: All course lecture powerpoints will be available on the ELMS website. Students will be expected to complete all additional reading assignments before that week’s class. There will be either one or two short quizzes in class, for which I will give at least one week’s notice. Periodically I may post discussion questions that will help prepare you for the quiz topics, class discussions, and exams.

Projects: Throughout the semester, occasionally there will be practical assignments, which will give you an opportunity to “try out” your working knowledge of the materials covered in class. This likely will include observing and reporting on court proceedings. If you are unable to attend court we will come up with a suitable alternative. We will discuss these projects in class as we do them, so be prepared to discuss your assignment with the rest of the class. All projects will be included in your class participation grade. Class time may be provided to complete these assignments.

Mock Trial Segments: Each student will be required to participate in mock trial examinations or motions hearings. The intention of these “mini trials” is to focus on evidentiary concepts, legal principles, and advocacy techniques, as opposed to fully litigating guilt and innocence. More details about the mock trials will be provided in class and/or on ELMS. This assignment will account for 20% of your final grade.

Exams: There will be two exams (which will collectively make up 50% of your grade). These exams will not be cumulative and may consist of multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. The exams will cover assigned material presented in lectures, readings, and class discussion. Students will take all exams in class. Students must be present in class to receive credit for the exam. Exams will be closed-book, except to the extent that materials are provided for either reference or analysis.
COURSE GRADES:
Grades shall be determined as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation/Projects</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mock Trial Segments</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Grade Distribution

- **A+**: 97% to 100%
- **A**: 96% to 93%
- **A-**: 92% to 90%
- **B+**: 89% to 87%
- **B**: 86% to 83%
- **B-**: 82% to 80%
- **C+**: 79% to 77%
- **C**: 76% to 73%
- **C-**: 72% to 70%
- **D**: 66% to 63%
- **D-**: 62% to 60%
- **D+**: 69% to 67%
- **F**: < 60%

COURSE POLICIES

**Attendance and Make-Up Policy**
Opportunities to make-up missed in-class work will only be given in cases of excused absences and official documentation is required. Exams and assignments are considered to be Major Scheduled Graded Events and therefore the University medical excuse policy which allows one student signed honor statement attesting to illness does not apply to them. Excused absences are: illness with a doctor's note, death in the immediate family, required school activities, and required court appearance. If a doctor will not write you a note, you will need to get a copy of
your medical record from them to verify your illness. By law, you are entitled to
get a copy of this and it is your responsibility to do so. I must be notified in person
or by phone or email PRIOR to missing an in-class assignment for me to consider
giving you a makeup. If you know you will not be in class for in-class work or a
date an assignment is due for an excused reason it is your responsibility to turn in
the work PRIOR to the due date unless I agree to other arrangements.

Grade Disputes

All grades will be posted on ELMS. If you have any concerns or issues regarding a
grade and would like to discuss it with me or have it reviewed please contact me
within 48 hours of receiving the grade. I will not discuss grade disputes after this
time.

I understand that sometimes, for various reasons, material can prove challenging.
Should you feel overwhelmed, frustrated, or simply worried that your grades are
suffering please contact me. It is better to tackle the problem at the earliest
possible moment and find a solution that will most benefit you.

Classroom Code of Conduct

It is important for both instructor and student to promote a positive atmosphere
and spirit of learning--therefore disruptive behavior will not be accepted. Late
arrivals to class should take their seat immediately. Students who must leave the
classroom for whatever reason must return quietly and avoid disruption. The use
of cell phones is not permitted. Students are welcome to use laptops to take
notes, but not for listening to music, monitoring social media, checking the scores,
or any other purpose other than helping you take good notes.

Note on Academic Integrity

Students are reminded that University policies concerning academic integrity and
the student honor pledge are applicable to this course. Any student caught
violating those policies will be reported to the academic integrity division of his or
her university.
Note on Instructor Access

Because I am a practicing attorney, I do not keep regular office hours at UMSG. That said, I am available by email and by telephone (202)-368-9775 and happy to talk with you any time you need my assistance. In addition, I can make arrangements to meet with you on campus before class, should that be needed.