

Contact Information: bwarren6@gmu.edu

Reading(s) & Supplemental Material

Jim VandeHei, Mike Allen and Roy Scwhartz, Smart Brevity (2022)

Bryan A. Garner, Legal Writing in Plain English (3d. Ed. 2023)

Jonah Perlin, Making Your (Power)Point: An Introductory Guide to Digital Presentation Design for Lawyers, 18 Legal Commc'n & Rhetoric 81 (2021)

Dyane L. O'Leary, Disconnected Connection, Suffolk University Law School Research Paper 25-1 (Jan. 2025).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the first few years following graduation and passing the bar, it is likely that a junior attorney will be responsible for an executive briefing or presentation. Executive briefings lack the structure of appellate arguments, but they are not informal settings. Indeed, the lack of structure can make the task more challenging. Teaching the skills involved with executive briefings will prepare students for this challenge that they will face in practice. This course teaches and develops student skills for making presentations in professional settings that—while not informal--lack the structure imposed by courts for oral argument for motions and briefs. The course is a workshop-type course with shorter lectures and hands-on time for students in making presentations. Students will make two presentations and write a briefing memorandum (and also create a short PowerPoint deck).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Learn fundamentals pertaining to the writing of executive memorandum.

Learn fundamentals of planning and delivering verbal briefings.

Learn fundamentals of creating PowerPoint slide decks.

Learn techniques for handling briefings in a virtual format.

GRADING & PARTICIPATION

Class Structure

Lectures of no more than one hour per class, followed by student exercises, workshops, and presentations.

Requirement(s)

Student participation is mandatory. Students must participate in this online course with cameras on. Students will be making presentations to the class.

Grading

The grade will have these components:

- 1) 10% First presentation (including both written materials and presentation itself)
- 2) 10% Issue Statements
- 3) 20% Final Presentation, PowerPoint Slides
- 4) 25% Final Presentation, Presentation Itself
- 5) 25% Final Presentation, Final Memorandum
- 6) 10% Professionalism

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory under the American Bar Association requirements on the law school. A sufficient number of unexcused absences will result in the student getting a failing grade for the course and no credit. Students must participate in this online course with cameras on. Students will be making presentations to the class and cannot be absent on days they are selected to present.

Exams

There are no exams; the course grade is based on written submissions related to presentations and the corresponding presentations.

Written Assignment(s)

Creating a question bank of questions that you can expect in a hypothetical job interview (in support of First Presentation)

A set of Deep Issue Statements (pro and con) for an issue that you identify and research

A briefing memoranda in support of your final presentation

A set of PowerPoint slides in support of your final presentation

COURSE SCHEDULE & ASSIGNED READINGS

Announcement(s):

SESSION No.	DATE	CLASS TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
1	May 20, 2025	Introduction Overview Information Overload Practicing Law in 2025	O'Leary, pp. 1-28, 46-56
2	May 22, 2025	Audience Deep Issue Statement	Garner 101-118; Smart Brevity, 1-44 Identify your specialty for research
3	May 27, 2025	Deep Issue Statement (Cont'd)	Smart Brevity, pp. 58-78, 93-95; Garner 118-124
4	May 29, 2025	Dealing with Counterarguments and Counter Points of View	Garner, pp. 90-98, 157-159, 211-231 ASSIGNMENT DUE: SUBMIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR YOUR PRESENTATION
5	June 3, 2025	Formatting Written Submissions (Not Superficialities) IN-CLASS EXERCISE STUDENT INTERVIEWS	Garner, pp, 69-80, 32-41; IN-CLASS EXERCISE STUDENT INTERVIEWS
6	June 5, 2025	OTHER WRITING POINTS IN CLASS EXERCISE: STUDENT INTERVIEWS	Perlin 82-99; ASSIGNMENT DUE: DEEP ISSUE STATEMENTS (PRO/CON)

7	June 10, 2025	CREATING POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS IN CLASS EXERCISE: STUDENT INTERVIEWS	Perlin 99-end IN-CLASS: Student Interviews
8	June 12, 2025	CREATING POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS (CONT'D)	
9	June 17, 2025	MANAGING BRIEFINGS AND MEETINGS	Due: First Draft of Briefing Memorandum
10	June 24, 2025	ASPECTS OF VIRTUAL BRIEFINGS	
11	June 26, 2025	CONFERENCE REPORTS, WRAP-UP, ETC.	
12	July 1, 2025	Student Presentations	Due: PowerPoint Presentation
13	July 3, 2025	Student Presentations	
14	July 9, 2025	Student Presentations	DUE: Final Briefing Memorandum

ACADEMIC STANDARDS & COURSE POLICIES

Academic Integrity:

Each student at Antonin Scalia Law School ("Scalia Law") is expected to behave honorably and with the highest personal integrity toward other law students, toward the law school and university, and toward other members of the legal profession." (Preamble to the Honor Code.)

The Honor Code prohibits a student from lying, cheating, or stealing, to include plagiarism and the use of any prohibited resource in an exam, coursework, or course paper. The full Honor Code can be accessed here: https://www.law.gmu.edu/academics/academic_standards

Recording Class Sessions:

Recording of class sessions by any means is prohibited. See AR 4-2.2: "Unless expressly permitted in writing by an instructor, no portion of a class session or an examination may be preserved by means of a recording device (such as an audio recording device or a camera)."

Use of Technology:

STUDENTS MAY USE LAPTOPS; ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE OPEN BOOK

University Email:

Students must use their Mason email account to receive university or law school information, including communications related to this class.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) in Academic Work:

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in the drafting or writing of papers or any other course work or assignments in this class is prohibited. According to AR 4-3: "Generative artificial intelligence (GAI) is a type of artificial intelligence that uses algorithms to generate new content, such as text or images, based on the data it has been trained on. For purposes of this regulation, GAI is not intended to encompass legal research databases and word processing applications that, while incorporating AI-based elements or enhancements, do not generate novel text." Use of GAI in a course that prohibits the use of GAI, constitutes an academic integrity violation.

Use of Electronic Text Books During Exams:

Students are permitted one laptop computer for exam taking purposes. Additional laptop computers or any other electronic data storage devices are not allowed in an exam room, unless permitted by the course instructor's written exam instructions. Electronic text books (e-books) may be used during exams that are designated as open book by the instructor and the instructor allows text books to be used during the exam and allows access to a student's computer files during the exam (open exam). E-books may not be used in exams where the instructor does not allow students to access their computer files during the exam (secure exam) even if the instructor permits access to text books. If the instructor has blocked access to the internet or computer files, you must bring a hard copy of the allowed text book(s) you wish to consult. Students will need to borrow or otherwise locate a hard copy of the e-book or print resources needed from the e-book to take into the exam room. The instructor determines the length of the examination and whether or not it is secure or open and what, if any, study materials are permitted during the exam. Students are responsible for adhering to the instructor's standards for all examinations, which are included in the examination materials.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. For further information and to register for services, please refer to <https://ds.gmu.edu/law-school/>, or call (703) 993-2474.

Name and Pronoun Use:

Students are encouraged to share their name and gender pronouns with me and indicate how best to address them in class and via email. Further information can be obtained at GMU's Chosen Name and Pronoun Policy, <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/chosen-name-pronouns-policy/>

Covid Protocols:

Please refer to GMU's *Safe Return to Campus* web site for information regarding GMU's safety protocols. The site can be accessed at: <https://shs.gmu.edu/services/covidservices/isolationguidance/>

Notice of Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Interpersonal Violence, and Stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Non-Confidential Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If a student wishes to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. Students may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

University Resources:

Counseling and Psychological Services:

<https://caps.gmu.edu/> Student Health Services:

<https://shs.gmu.edu/>

Mason Square Campus Clinic: After-Hours Nurse Advice – 703-991-2831
Mason Square Campus Clinic Location: Van Metre Hall, Room B102.

Student Support and Advocacy Center: <https://ssac.gmu.edu/>

Police: Emergency - Dial 911; 703-993-8070, Van Metre Hall, Room 110. Police escort services: 703-993-8370.

Sexual Assault Services: 703-993-8186, Van Metre Hall, Room 222D. Mason Square information:

<https://masonsquare.gmu.edu>