



FALL 2026 COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Number: 329-001

Course Title: Trial Advocacy for Competitors

Credit Hours: 2

Grading Mode: CR/NC. This class is credit/no credit. In order to receive credit for the class, you must compete in the competition you are assigned.

Meeting Day(s)/Time(s): THUR. 8:10-10:10 pm

Meeting Mode: In-person

Exam Day(s)/Time(s): N/A

Final Exam Mode: N/A

Prerequisite(s): Law 222

Corequisite(s): N/A

Instructor(s): Kristen Kugel

Contact Information: kkugel@gmu.edu

Office Hours: I have office hours by appointment. I am always available to review your competition materials and answer any questions you may have.

Course Overview

The purpose of this course is to (1) build on skills learned during core classes such as evidence and LRWA and apply them to real life trial practice (2) to focus intensively on the preparation and delivery of all parts of a jury trial in connection with participation in an extramural trial advocacy competition.

Course Learning Outcomes

Taking this course should help you to:

- Understand the parts of a jury trial and the expectations of a trial level court
- Work as part of a team to break-down a complex legal case involving a criminal or civil issue
- Formulate a theme, draft opening statements, closing arguments, and direct and cross examinations
- Develop trial advocacy skills that can be applied to other competitions and trial level practice in the future

Reading(s) & Supplement(s):

- Mauet, Trial Techniques
- Federal Rules of Evidence (Taking evidence is a pre-req or co-req unless prior approval is received)

Classroom Policies

Attendance: Per AR 3-1.4, “maintenance of matriculation requires regular class preparation, participation and attendance, registration in the course of study required for the student’s program (full-time or part-time), successive registration for each fall and spring term of each academic year until study is completed, and compliance with all other relevant requirements.”

Absences: Per AR 4-1.1, “if a student is absent for any reason for more than 20 percent of the sessions of a course, the student is not eligible for credit in that course. A student who is not present for at least 75 percent of a session of the course is absent from that session.”

Course Schedule & Assignments

******The subject matter and content of each class is subject to change and dependent on the competition schedule and the needs of the teams. The beginning of each class may start with a short period of instruction (depending on the competition schedule) and the other part of class is intended to be used to prepare for your competition. You are expected to come prepared for class and to be prepared for your competition. Your coaches will set expectations and timelines of goals that you should be meeting before your practices. There will be various check-ins to make sure you are meeting those goals and are prepared for practice. I will send out an email ahead of the next scheduled class to inform everyone what competition we will be working on in class and what you should be prepared to do. Each student may be expected to play the part of an attorney, a witness, or the Judge. You will be expected to learn different parts of the trial and competition problems to assist other teams with their competition preparation, particularly after your competition has finished.

*******The classes devoted to skills practice may involve a trial exercise that each student is expected to participate in. Skills practice includes assisting other teams with preparation for their competitions and as noted above you may be required to learn other problems and/or draft parts of a different problem to help teams that are competing later on in the semester.

8/20 – INTRODUCTION TO COMPETITIONS – What is competition format and what to expect including expectations, coaches, practice schedules

8/27 - THEMES – What is a theme? Theory v. theme, labels, and storytelling in the context of a competition

9/3 – DIRECT EXAMINATIONS – Being a facilitator, courtroom positioning, best way to create questions, and looping

9/10 – CROSS EXAMINATION AND EVIDENCE – Leading the witness, courtroom positioning, object of cross, demonstrations of entering evidence

9/17 - OBJECTIONS AND CLOSING – What is a proper objection? Content of closing

9/24 – EXPERTS – Why do we use experts? Order of questions and cross examination of experts

10/1 – SKILLS PRACTICE***

10/8 – FALL BREAK

10/15 – SKILLS PRACTICE***

10/22- SKILLS PRACTICE***

10/29 - SKILLS PRACTICE***

11/5 – SEMESTER WRAP-UP

11/12– SEMESTER WRAP-UP

11/19 – SEMESTER WRAP-UP

Student Resources

[Antonin Scalia Law School Academic Regulations](#)

[GMU Common Course Policies Addendum](#)

[Mason Square Services](#)

[Mason Square Police](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room 110

Emergency - Dial 911

Escort Services - 703-993-8070

Dispatch – 703-993-2810

[Student Support and Advocacy Center \(SSAC\)](#)

Mason Square Sexual Assault Services:

Van Metre Hall, Room 222D

703-993-8186

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.

[Mason Square Clinic](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room B102

703-993-2831

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Disability Services](#)

[University Life](#)