

COPYRIGHT
LAW 191 – FALL 2026

PROF. NEWMAN
cnewman2@gmu.edu
Office 424
703-993-8131

COURSE SCHEDULE/MEETING TIMES/TYPE:

This is an in-person course that meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:40 AM to 11:40 AM. **Please note that due to a professional conflict I will need to reschedule the class session currently allotted to 9/24.**

COURSE OVERVIEW/DESCRIPTION:

This course will cover the fundamentals of U.S. copyright law and policy. After taking this course, you should:

- Be familiar with the structure and key provisions of the U.S. Copyright Act.
- Be familiar with the main judicial doctrines interpreting, applying, and supplementing the statutory framework.
- Be able to spot and analyze copyright issues arising in a given fact pattern.

Our primary materials will be the following:

- Fromer & Sprigman, Copyright Law: Cases and Materials v.8.0 (this book is available as a free download [from copyright.org](http://fromcopyright.org)).
- Title 17 of the U.S. Code (which is available [at Copyright Law of the United States](#)).
- Various supplemental materials I will provide on Canvas.

A tentative schedule of class readings follows. The casebook readings are generally in the range of 25-35 pages per class. **Note, however, that this body of law is governed by a statute, which means that (where applicable) the statutory language is the primary source we are supposed to be interpreting. Whenever you see citations to the statute within the assigned materials, it goes without saying that you need to actually read the text of the provisions in question.** When you are outlining, your starting point should be the statutory language, and then you can flesh out the interpretations thereof provided by caselaw or other sources. When you are asked to analyze a copyright problem (in class, on the exam, or in real life), the first thing out of your mouth should always be to identify the governing statutory language.

Class	Casebook assignment	Topic
1	1-29	Introduction; Subject Matter: Fixation
2	29-53	Originality; Derivative Works

Class	Casebook assignment	Topic
3	53-79	Compilations; Idea-Expression; Copyrightable Subject Matter
4	79-100	Useful Articles
5	100-128	Computer Software
6	135-170	Authorship and Ownership
7	171-189	Formalities; Duration Rules
8	189-219	Duration Policy; Renewals; Terminations of Transfer
9	221-242	Exclusive Rights: Reproduction Right
10	243-279	Reproduction Right (cont'd)
11	280-298 319-327	Distribution and Importation; Fictional Characters
12	299-319	Right to Prepare Derivative Works
13	327-349	Moral Rights
14	349-374	Public Performance and Display
15	374-398	Music Industry
16	399-428	Fair Use: Foundational Cases
17	429-450	Fair Use: Contemporary Cases
18	451-473	Fair Use: Contemporary Cases (cont'd)
19	473-492	Fair Use: Contemporary Cases (cont'd)
20	492-524	Fair Use: Contemporary Cases (cont'd);
21	525-557	Volition; Secondary Liability; Liability of Online Service Providers
22	557-586	Liability of Device Manufacturers
23	587-620	Litigation and Remedies
24	621-641	Remedies (cont'd); Technological Protections
25	642-672	Tech Protections (cont'd); Copyright Contracts
26	683-699	Preemption

BASIS OF EVALUATION & ASSESSMENTS:

Grades will be determined based on two factors:

- Class participation (in-class and online)
- Final exam

Grade adjustments for class participation:

People who stand out over the course of the term as notably helpful contributors through either oral class participation (whether on-call or volunteer), and/or online discussion may receive a positive grade adjustment. “Notably helpful” is about quality, not quantity—it means the sort of contributions that show thoughtful engagement and enrich our collective consideration of the topics at hand. Repeated failure to be adequately prepared when called on may result in a negative adjustment.

Online:

Class time is a very limited resource, and I do not want those limitations to prevent us from carrying on conversations about whatever aspects of the materials interest you. Ideally, I would like to use Canvas as an extension of class in which we can pursue trains of thought as far as people wish to take them.

The “Discussion” forum is a place where you can raise questions or comments that we didn’t get to in class, and share any relevant articles or other links related to copyright issues. In fact, if you have a question that doesn’t get answered in class I’d prefer that you post it here rather than emailing or seeing me privately, as that way it can be the spark of a group discussion from which everyone can benefit.

Final exam:

Most of the grade will be determined by the final exam. Like most law school exams, this one will pose fact patterns and ask you to write legal analyses applying the doctrines we have studied over the course of the term. Expect the exam to be in-class and 4 hours. You will not have access to files on your computer.

COMMUNICATION/OFFICE HOURS:

This class has a Canvas page, which is where class materials will be posted. You will be regarded as having constructive notice of anything posted there.

I highly encourage use of the discussion forums on Canvas to ask questions and carry on conversations related to class. This enables everyone to participate in the conversation whenever temporally convenient for them, and provides practice in clear written communication about legal issues.

I will announce and post on Canvas my office hours schedule during the first week of class. If you would like to schedule an individual meeting outside of that, feel free to email me. If there is demand, we can also discuss setting up regular hours for walk-ins. During any such sessions I will also keep a Zoom chatroom open so that you have the choice of joining either in person or online.

RELEVANT LAW SCHOOL/UNIVERSITY POLICIES:

Class Recordings Prohibited:

Pursuant to Academic Regulation 4-2.2, 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 camera. Any exceptions to this policy must be expressly permitted in writing by me. Upon request, I may record a class session for the benefit of a student who has a valid reason for unavoidable absence.

Academic Integrity:

It is expected that students adhere to the Antonin Scalia Law School Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing. This includes a student obligation to never represent the work of another as their own, and to never provide or accept unauthorized assistance on any school related assignment. The Honor Code is available here: [Academic Standards](#).

Classroom Accommodations:

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please visit [Disability Services](#) for detailed information about the Disabilities Registration Process. Faculty may not receive or respond to requests for an accommodation. All requests must be handled by the office of Disability Services. You may contact Disability Services directly via email at ods@gmu.edu or phone at (703) 993-2474. If you have any questions about how in-class or testing accommodations are implemented at the law school, please contact the Assistant Dean, Student Academic Affairs for more information.

Non-Discrimination

As set forth in University Policies [1201](#), [1202](#), and [1203](#), George Mason University is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from any discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin/shared ancestry, sex, disability, military status (including veteran status), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, pregnancy status or genetic information. Students can report concerns regarding discrimination or harassment based on protected status to the DEI Office.