



FALL 2026 COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Number: 883-001
Course Title: HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROSECUTION SEMINAR
Credit Hours: 2
Grading Mode: LETTER
Meeting Time(s): TUE 6:05 PM- 8:05 PM
Meeting Mode: ON CAMPUS
Exam Time(s): N/A
Exam Mode: N/A
Prerequisite(s): N/A
Corequisite(s): N/A
Instructor(s): BRANDY WAGSTAFF & ELIZABETH HUTSON

Contact Info

Emails: ehutson2@gmu.edu | bwagstaf@gmu.edu

We do not hold regular office hours but are available by appointment. Absent extenuating circumstances, we will answer all emails within 24 hours. Email is the preferred method of communication outside the classroom, but we are available to speak to students via Zoom or telephone upon request. When sending an email, please include both professors on the email.

Reading(s) & Supplement(s)

There is no textbook for this class. All readings will be made available on Canvas or can be accessed through Westlaw/Lexis. Supplemental readings will be placed on Canvas throughout the semester. We will make appropriate announcements about any additional readings during class, but please be sure to check Canvas frequently.

Course Overview

This class will provide an in-depth analysis of federal human trafficking law and application, to include an overview of the foundational human trafficking statutes and elements of both sex and labor trafficking statutes; strategic investigative steps; common pre-trial issues; trial strategies specific to human trafficking cases; common sentencing issues in human trafficking cases; civil litigation on behalf of trafficking victims; and broader policy issues related to the prosecution of human trafficking cases. The course will focus primarily on criminal human trafficking prosecutions but will also discuss the civil remedy in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students should:

1. Be able to identify the constitutional and/or statutory authority for sex and labor trafficking crimes.
2. Be able to identify the elements and applicability of sex and labor trafficking statutes.
3. Understand victim-centered, trauma-informed approaches to human trafficking investigations

and prosecutions.

4. Articulate case-appropriate strategies for victim and witness interviews, issuing subpoenas, discovery, and grand jury in sex and labor trafficking cases.
5. Recognize and identify the challenges and complexities inherent in labor and sex trafficking investigations and prosecutions.
6. Be able to identify when sentencing enhancements and related statutes may apply to a particular human trafficking violation.
7. Be familiar with civil remedies available to trafficking victims.
8. Understand broader policy themes related to human trafficking.

Grading Policies

Your grade will be based on (1) a research paper (50% of final grade); (2) class assignments (40% of final grade); and (3) class participation (10% of final grade). There will be assigned reading each week. The reading assignments are designed to stimulate discussion, and we expect robust class discussion.

Attendance:

Attendance will be taken at every class. If you know that you will be late to a class or must leave early, please let us know via email as soon as you reasonably can. Students are expected to be prepared for class. Although we usually rely upon volunteers for class discussion, we reserve the right to call on students. If students use computers or tablets during class, they should be used only for taking notes. Appropriate use of computers or tablets will be factored into the class participation grade.

Research Paper:

Students will complete a research paper on a human trafficking legal topic of their choice, and pre-approved by the professors. The topic proposal is due by October 6, 2026. The length of the research paper must be between 15-20 pages. The paper should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides, and numbered at the bottom of the page. Please use Times New Roman Font #12 on both the body of the paper and your footnotes. Please also use proper citation, syntax, and spelling. Please properly attribute all directly quoted and paraphrased material in your paper. The research paper is due on the last day of exams.

Other Assignments:

In addition to the research paper due at the end of the semester, there will be four short writing assignments due throughout the semester. The dates are provided in the schedule below. These assignments will range from 1-5 pages, depending on the assignment. They are meant to be manageable and to help you build your criminal investigation and litigation skills in the context of human trafficking cases.

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.”

Participation & Preparation: Class participation is mandatory and accounts for 10% of your final grade. Please come prepared to discuss the reading material and any posted discussion questions each week. The best seminar classes are the ones where there is lively discussion and debate. We encourage everyone to share their opinions and points of view but remind you to do so in a respectful and professional manner, especially when discussing sensitive topics that include descriptions of violence and sexual assault.

Use of Technology & AI: Strict Use Policy: The use of generative AI tools is not permitted for any coursework in this course. Unauthorized use will be treated as a violation of academic standards. Consistent with Academic Regulation 4-3, you may not use generative artificial intelligence (AI) to draft your research paper. If you have any questions about whether a particular use of generative AI is permissible under this policy, you should consult with your professor **before** using the tool.

Course Schedule & Assignments

The following assignments may change as the semester progresses. We will notify you of any changes in advance. Be sure to refer to the selected statutes, as applicable, for each assignment.

Class #	Date	Class Topic	Assignment(s)
1	August 18	Introduction to Human Trafficking	Required: USA Human Trafficking Bulletin—Human Trafficking: Fundamentals & The Survivor-Centered, Trauma-Informed Approach (pp. 3-15 & 39-43); <i>United States v. Kozminski</i>, 487 U.S. 931 (1988) (entire opinion) Optional: John Cotton Richmond, <i>Human Trafficking: Understanding the Law and Deconstructing Myths</i>, 60 St. Louis U.L.J. 1, 41 (2015); Human Trafficking: Root Causes, Alliance to End Human Trafficking (2024)
2	August 25	Coercion	Required: <i>United States v. Dann</i>, 652 F.3d 1160, 1162-73 (9th Cir. 2011); <i>United States v. Purcell</i>, 967 F.3d 159 (2d Cir. 2020) (Background & Part II.C of Discussion); <i>United States v. Mack</i>, 808 F.3d 1074, 1077-83 (6th Cir. 2015); Optional: Vasantha Rao, <i>Recognizing & Understanding Nonviolent Coercion in Human Trafficking Cases</i>, 70 DOJ J. Fed. L. & Prac. 321 (March 2022)

Class #	Date	Class Topic	Assignment(s)
3	September 1	Victim-Centered, Trauma Informed Approaches	Required: CCHT Resource Guide; USSC Crime Victims Rights Primer; DHS T-Visa Law Enforcement Resource Guide (pp. 1-5); Sample T- Visa Application
<i>Assignment 1: Victim Interview Outline Due: September 8 by 5:00 p.m.</i>			
4	September 8	Forced Labor: Overview, Domestic Servitude	Required: <i>United States v. Kaufman</i> , 546 F.3d 1242, 1246-50, 1259-65 (10th Cir. 2008); <i>United States v. Calimlim</i> , 538 F.3d 706, 708-13 (7th Cir. 2008); <i>United States v. Callahan</i> , 801 F.3d 606, 613-21 (6th Cir. 2015); <i>United States v. Toure</i> , 965 F.3d 393, 396-402 (5th Cir. 2020); Optional: <i>United States v. Bolarinwa</i> , Trial Brief
5	September 15	Forced Labor: Agricultural Cases, Religious Cults, Nail Salons & Massage Parlors	Required: Operation Blooming Onion Indictment (2021); UNOI Indictment (2021); <i>United States v. Luong</i> , 125 F.4th 147, 149-55 (4th Cir. 2025); Polaris, Human Trafficking in Illicit Massage Businesses (Jan. 2018) (Introduction & Section 1) Optional: Polaris, Exploitation and Trafficking of Agricultural Workers During the Pandemic (June 2021)
6	September 22	Sex Trafficking: Buyers of Commercial Sex, Drug-Based Coercion, Interstate Commerce Element, Fraud	Required: <i>United States v. Jungers</i> , 702 F.3d 1066 (2013) (entire opinion); <i>United States v. Bazar</i> , 747 F. App'x 454 (9th Cir. 2018) (entire opinion); <i>United States v. Evans</i> , 476 F.3d 1176 (11th Cir. 2007) (entire opinion); <i>United States v. Bixler</i> , No. 21-5194, 2022 WL 247740 (6th Cir. Jan. 27, 2022) (Pts. I, II & VI) Optional: <i>United States v. Session</i> , Trial Brief (Section on Interstate Commerce)

Class #	Date	Class Topic	Assignment(s)
7	September 29	Sex Trafficking: Benefitting Financially and “Anything of Value,” Minors (Reasonable Opportunity to Observe, Recklessly Disregard), Victim- Perpetrator Dilemmas	Required: <i>United States v. Flanders</i>, 752 F.3d 1317 (11th Cir. 2014) (Pts. I, III, V & VII); <i>United States v. Whyte</i>, 928 F.3d 1317 (11th Cir. 2019) (Pts. I & III.A); <i>United States v. Wearing</i>, 865 F.3d 553 (7th Cir. 2017) (entire opinion) Optional: <i>United States v. Patel</i>, No. 13-286 (E.D. La. 2015), Plea Agreement
Topic Proposal for Final Paper Due: October 6 by 5:00 p.m.			
8	October 6	Investigative Tools: Grand Jury, Search Warrants, Subpoenas	Required: <i>United States v. McCoy</i>, Matt Markovich Expert Notice; Sample Stipulation; Sample Protective Orders (2) <i>Guest Speaker: Matt Markovich</i>
Assignment 2: Investigative Plan Due: October 13 by 5:00 p.m.			
9	October 13	Charging Strategies and Culpability Considerations	Required: USA Human Trafficking Bulletin— Criminal Conduct of Victims: Policy Considerations (pp. 139-47); USA Human Trafficking Bulletin— Chapter 77 and Beyond: Charging Strategies in Human Trafficking Cases (only read pp. 49-57, starting with Section IV) Optional: Sabrina Balmgamwalla, <i>Trafficking in Narratives: Conceptualizing and Recasting Victims, Offenders, and Rescuers in the War on Human Trafficking</i>, 94 Denv. L. Rev. 1, 23 (2016).

Class #	Date	Class Topic	Assignment(s)
10	October 20	Pre-Trial Issues	Required: USA Human Trafficking Bulletin— Federal Rule of Evidence 412: Admissibility of Prior and Subsequent Prostitution Evidence in Sex Trafficking Prosecutions (pp. 67-78); Masha Simonova, <i>Climate of Fear: Admission of Prior Bad Acts to Establish Coercion in Human Trafficking Cases</i> , 26 Cardozo J. Equal Rts. & Soc. Just. 29 (2019).
Assignment 3: Motion in Limine Due: October 27 by 5:00 p.m.			
11	October 27	Trial: Direct Examination of Victims, Cross Examination of Defendants, Expert Witnesses, Pro Se Defendants	Required: Selected Trial Transcripts
November 3: No Class – Election Day			
Assignment 4: Direct Examination of Victim or Cross Examination of Defendant Due: November 10 by 5:00 p.m.			
12	November 10	Sentencing Issues & Restitution	Required: USA Human Trafficking Bulletin—Understanding and Applying the Sentencing Guidelines for Trafficking and Related Convictions (pp. 105-14); <i>United States v. Royal</i>, 442 F. App'x 794 (4th Cir. 2011) (entire opinion); Brandy Wagstaff, <i>Securing Restitution for Victims of Human Trafficking</i>, 70 DOJ J. of Fed. Law & Practice 339 (March 2022); <i>United States v. Edwards</i>, 995 F.3d 342 (4th Cir. 2021) (entire opinion); 18 U.S.C. § 28 Optional: <i>United States v Anthony</i>, 39 F.4th 1247 (10th Cir. 2022); Freedom Network USA, Summary and Analysis of the Trafficking Survivors Relief Act (TSRA)

Class #	Date	Class Topic	Assignment(s)
13	November 17	Civil Remedies Under the TVPA	Required: Amara Vacatur Toolkit; Clearing the Slate: Seeking Effective Remedies for Criminalized Trafficking Victims, CUNY Law School International Women's Human Rights Clinic (February 2014); <i>Doe v. Wyndham Hotels & Resorts</i> Complaint; News Article: California Hotel Chains Can't Duck Sex Trafficking Complicity Claims (March 14, 2025) <i>Guest Speaker: Martina Vandenberg</i> <i>Final Paper Topic Presentations</i>
Final Paper Due: December 14 by 11:59 p.m.			

Student Resources

[Antonin Scalia Law School Academic Regulations](#)

[GMU Common Course Policies Addendum](#)

[Mason Square Services](#)

[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](#)

[Student Conduct](#)

[University Life](#)