



## SPRING 2026 COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Number: 519-001

Course Title: Federal Criminal Investigations

Credit Hours: 1

Grading Mode: Letter grade

Meeting Time(s): THUR 8:10p-9:05p

Meeting Mode: On campus

Exam Time(s): TBD

Exam Mode: Final Paper

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Corequisite(s): N/A

Instructor(s):

Matthew Kahn & Elina Rubin-Smith

Contact Information and Office Hours:

[mkahn3@gmu.edu](mailto:mkahn3@gmu.edu)

[erubinsm@gmu.edu](mailto:erubinsm@gmu.edu)

Reading(s) & Supplement(s):

The Practice of Federal Criminal Law: Prosecution and Defense (1st Edition) by Harry I. Subin, Barry Berke, Eric Tirschwell. Some supplemental materials may be assigned.

Course Overview:

This course focuses on the legal and practical aspects of conducting and defending against a federal criminal investigation. Specifically, this seminar examines the work of prosecutors and defense attorneys applying the constitutional, statutory, ethical and other rules that govern the federal criminal process from conducting the investigation through the decision to charge, as well as the process involved with guilty pleas, trials, and sentencing hearings. We will discuss the relevant rules, as well as contextualize this body of law, describing the real-world process of prosecuting and defending those accused of crime, proving facts, and the skills involved in applying the law to the facts. We will use materials from a textbook, as well as supplemental materials relevant

to the various topics that we will cover. We will also have a variety of guest speakers attend some of the sessions to discuss their areas of investigative experience and focus.

### Course Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of:

- (1) the laws governing federal criminal investigations;
- (2) common issues arising in federal criminal investigations; and
- (3) the law enforcement tools available to investigators and prosecutors.

### Grading Policies:

Participation %: 20. This includes various opportunities to discuss the investigative process and real-life scenarios and cases relevant to the topic at hand.

Midterm Exam/ Paper %: N/A

Final Exam/ Paper %: N/A

Additional Content %: 80 Final Paper. This writing assignment (10- to 15-pages) will involve a deep dive into one criminal docket, including analyzing investigative techniques, charging decisions, and defense challenges to the prosecution's case.

### 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."

### Use of Technology & AI:

Generative AI tools may be used in this course for the limited purpose of finding primary and secondary sources. Students must not rely upon AI summaries of those sources. Students may not use AI for brainstorming, drafting, editing, or for any other purpose than as a search tool. Unauthorized use will be treated as a violation of academic standards.

## Course Schedule & Assignments

### Week 1:

Date: 1/15

Topic: Overview of the Federal Criminal Process

Assignment(s): Chapter 1 and 2

### Week 2:

Date: 1/22

Topic: Proof in the Criminal Process

Assignment(s): Chapter 3

### Week 3:

Date: 1/29

Topic: The Initial Decision to Charge by Complaint

Assignment(s): Chapter 4

### Week 4:

Date: 2/5

Topic: Proceedings on the Complaint

Assignment(s): Chapter 5 and 6

### Week 5:

Date: 2/12

Topic: The Guilty Plea System

Assignment(s): Chapter 7, 8, 9

### Week 6:

Date: 2/19

Topic: Pre-Indictment Investigations

Assignment(s): Chapter 10

Week 7:

Date: 2/26

Topic: Pre-Indictment Investigations (continued)

Assignment(s): Chapter 10

Week 8:

Date: 3/5

Topic: The Decision to Indict

Assignment(s): Chapter 11

Week 9:

Date: 3/19

Topic: The Decision to Indict (continued)

Assignment(s): Chapter 11

Week 10:

Date: 3/26

Topic: Plea Negotiation/Non-Cooperating Defendants

Assignment(s): Chapter 12

Week 11:

Date: 4/2

Topic: Pre-Trial Discovery

Assignment(s): Chapter 13

Week 12:

Date: 4/9

Topic: Pretrial Motions

Assignment(s): Chapter 14

Week 13:

Date: 4/16

Topic: Preparation for Trial

Assignment(s): Chapter 15

## 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](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

[Mason Square Clinic](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room B102

703-991-2831

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Disability Services](#)

[Student Conduct](#)

[University Life](#)