

Course Number and Section(s): CJL 3510-0002

Course Name: The Courts

Semester and Year: Fall 2025

Class Location: DIF 0201

Class Days: Tuesday & Thursday

Class Time: 3:05pm to 4:20pm EST

Professor: Bryan Holmes

Email: bholmes4@fsu.edu

Office: 201A Criminology & CJ Bldg.

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 12:00pm to 1:30pm
or by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Yewon Yoo

Email: yy23e@fsu.edu

Office: 201 Criminology & CJ Bldg.

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with an understanding of the history, trends, research, and theories of the United States' court system. Specifically, the course will focus on (1) the roles, responsibilities, and challenges faced by key personnel functioning daily within the courtroom, (2) court organization, (3) courtroom proceedings, (4) court rulings, and (5) criminal law concepts. By the end of this course, students will be able to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the history, structure, status, and issues in United States courts.

Course Objectives

- Understand the basic functions of the court systems within the United States
- Differentiate between and understand the roles of key court system personnel
- Understand the Constitutional procedures governing arrest and trial
- Understand court organizational structures
- Explain how trial courts operate and differ from one another
- Describe the role of appellate courts and the importance of various review standards
- Understand general court procedures
- Understand the significance and meaning of court rulings
- Understand the sources of law
- Evaluate statutes and apply their elements to specific cases
- Identify the similarities and differences between criminal offenses
- Assess the challenges in court processes and investigate possible solutions

Text & Materials

Required

None. All required readings will be provided on Canvas.

Attendance Policy

You are highly encouraged to attend each and every class. Information will be covered in class that is not available elsewhere. If you miss class, I highly recommend that you borrow notes from one of your fellow classmates and talk to me about any additional clarification you may need. Seeing as this is a face-to-face course, I do not post any slides, lectures, or notes online.

Course Assignments

Exams

There will be four exams (for dates see below). The exams will be administered in person, in class. Exams will be multiple choice. The Midterm and Final Exam will be comprehensive (contain information that we have covered up to that point in the semester). Meanwhile, Exams 1 and 3 will only cover information over those units. If a student is unable to complete an exam on the scheduled date, they should contact the professor **at least** 24 hours in advance. Students who miss an exam without a formal excuse will receive a 0. The exams will be administered in the normal classroom on the following day/times:

Exam 1	September 23 rd , 2025	3:05pm to 4:20pm EST
Midterm	October 21 st , 2025	3:05pm to 4:20pm EST
Exam 3	November 18 th , 2025	3:05pm to 4:20pm EST
Final Exam	December 9 th , 2025	5:30pm to 7:30pm EST

Quizzes

Every other week(end) there will be a quiz available on CANVAS. The quizzes will consist of both multiple choice and short answer questions based on the topics covered over that 2-week period. The purpose of these quizzes is two-fold: (1) engage you all in the material outside of the classroom setting and (2) help prepare you for the exams. Quizzes will be due by Tuesday at 3:05pm EST (the start of class) of the following week. Quizzes not turned in on time will receive a 0 and there will be no opportunity to make up missed quizzes. Use of artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT, for the quizzes is prohibited and will result in a 0 for all questions—not just the question you used it for.

Case Study

The case study requires the student to research a statute, as well as an accompanying case brought under that statute. The goal is to show an outline of each element of a law and demonstrate how the prosecution succeeded in proving, or failed to prove, each of these elements in a specific case. The case must be disposed of via trial—no pleas. There are two ways this assignment can be completed. First, the student can turn in an infographic. I will provide more

detailed information on the instructions of the infographic, but part of the infographic grade will be clarity of the material—so be consistent with factors such as titles, headers, spacing, citations, and fonts (sizes and styles). When uploading the infographic, it must be a PDF. Second, the student can write a one-to-two paged, single spaced, paper. If this option is taken, the submission must be a Word document (**no** .pages or google doc files), Times New Roman, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins.

You must use APA citations for the statute you are drawing upon and the case you are describing. The use of artificial intelligence, such as Chat GPT, is strictly prohibited and will result in a 0. The case study will be due on November 13th, 2025 at 11:59pm EST.

Extra Credit

There will be one opportunity for extra credit – available to all students. No extra credit opportunity will be specific to a student, please do not ask.

Course Grading

Assignment	% of Final Grade
Exam 1	16%
Midterm	21%
Exam 3	16%
Final Exam	25%
Quizzes	11%
Case Study	11%

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	% Equal to or Greater than
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
F	0-59

Syllabus Change Policy

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

University Attendance Policy

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family, and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid written excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

Academic Honor Policy

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of student's academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to ". . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://fda.fsu.edu/academic-resources/academic-integrity-and-grievances/academic-honor-policy>).

Academic Success

Your academic success is a top priority for Florida State University. University resources to help you succeed include tutoring centers, computer labs, counseling and health services, and services for designated groups, such as veterans and students with disabilities. The following information is not exhaustive, so please check with your advisor or the Department of Student Support and Transitions to learn more.

Americans with Disabilities Act

FSU is committed to providing reasonable accommodation for all persons with disabilities in a manner that is consistent with the academic standards of the course while empowering the student to meet the integral requirements of the course. Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Office of Accessibility Services; and (2) request a letter from the Office of Accessibility Services to be sent to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type; and (3) meet (in person, via phone, email, zoom, etc...) with each instructor to whom a letter of accommodation was sent to review approved accommodations. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from the Office of Accessibility Services has been provided. This syllabus and other class materials are available in an alternative format upon request. For the latest version of this statement and more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Office of Accessibility Services
874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
oas@fsu.edu
<https://dsst.fsu.edu/oas>

Confidential Campus Resources

Various centers and programs are available to assist students with navigating stressors that might impact academic success. These include the following:

Victim Advocate Program

University Center A, Rm. 4100
(850) 644-7161
Available 24/7/365
Office Hours: M-F 8-5
<https://dsst.fsu.edu/vap>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Florida State University's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) primary mission is to address psychological needs and personal concerns, which may interfere with students' academic progress, social development, and emotional well-being. The following in-person and virtual (tele-mental health) services are available to all enrolled students residing in the state of Florida:

1. Individual therapy
 2. Group therapy
 3. Crisis Intervention
 4. Psychoeducational and outreach programming
 5. After hours crisis-hotline
 6. Access to community providers for specialized treatment
- Call 850-644-TALK (8255) for more information on how to initiate services.

Counseling and Psychological Services
250 Askew Student Life Center
942 Learning Way
(850) 644-TALK (8255)
Walk-in and Appointment Hours:
M-F 8 am – 4 pm
<https://counseling.fsu.edu/>

University Health Services

Services at UHS are available to all enrolled students residing in Florida:

The mission of University Health Services (UHS) is to promote and improve the overall health and well-being of FSU students. UHS provides a coordinated continuum of care through prevention, intervention, and treatment. Services include general medical care, priority care, gynecological services, physicals, allergy injection clinic, immunizations, diagnostic imaging, physical therapy, and a medical response unit. The Center for Health Advocacy and Wellness (CHAW) assists students in their academic success through individual, group, and population-based health and wellness initiatives. Topics include wellness, alcohol and other drugs, hazing prevention, nutrition and body image, sexual health, and power based personal violence prevention. For more information, go to uhs.fsu.edu.

University Health Services
Health and Wellness Center
960 Learning Way
Tallahassee, FL 32306
Hours: M-F, 8 am – 4 pm
(850) 644-6230
<https://uhs.fsu.edu/>

Free Tutoring from FSU

On-campus tutoring and writing assistance is available for many courses at Florida State University. For more information, visit the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services' comprehensive list of on-campus tutoring options - see <http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring> or contact tutor@fsu.edu. High-quality tutoring is available by appointment and on a walk-in basis. These services are offered by tutors trained to encourage the highest level of individual academic success while upholding personal academic integrity.