SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION. This course will introduce students to the fundamental case law, practices and procedures of the criminal justice system. We will begin by developing an understanding of the purpose and structure of courts. We will then study the various stages of a criminal trial, from arrest, to arraignment, to bail hearings, to motion hearings, to trial (with and without a jury) to sentencing. We will also examine the roles, functions, and missions of the different courtroom participants, i.e., judges, prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys, law clerks, court clerks and administrators, jurors, witnesses, police offices, and the media. And we will study the underlying philosophy, purpose and goals of sentencing and plea bargaining in criminal cases. And most importantly, we will visit several courts and have the unique opportunity to see actual cases firsthand and then also talk directly with court personnel about the cases.

The course is taught by Distinguished Professor Roderick Ireland, former Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, who sat as both a trial and appellate judge for 37 years. He is the author of Massachusetts Juvenile Law, a leading treatise published by Thomson West Publishing.


HANDOUTS. Additional materials will be distributed in class from time to time on cases, statute, pleadings, legislation, news articles, etc.

FORMAT. Class will include lectures, court attendance, role play, video tape and slide presentations, class discussion, special guest speakers, and field trips to several courts.

CLASS ATTENDANCE. Regular attendance is expected. Lectures will almost certainly include material not covered in the assigned readings.

COURT ATTENDANCE AND ORAL REPORT. An important component of this course is your participation in the field trips to courts. Court attendance provides a unique opportunity for you to observe real life proceedings in court sessions. I have arranged special access for you, and your court visits will provide the experiential foundation upon which my lectures and your learning will be based. These visits will maximize and enhance your knowledge by bringing theory to life.
Because each court visit will require several hours at a time, (we can’t do it all in just an hour or two) some of our on-campus classes will be cancelled to balance out the extra time required to attend the court sessions.

Here is how it will work: We will visit several Courts, as well as either the jail and or House of Correction. During our visits to the courts you will observe real life cases. At the conclusion of your visits you will write a memo to me about your observations, and you will also give an oral report to the entire class, per my instructions, during the last week of class. (See GUIDELINES FOR COURT OBSERVATIONS.) Note that failure to submit your memorandum on time or to give your oral report as scheduled will result in a failing grade for the assignment.

**Important Note:** Because the field trips are both important and essential elements of this course, you should not take this course if you are unable to attend the field trips because of schedule conflicts or for any other reason.

**FIELD TRIPS TO SEVERAL COURTS.** Because courts are not open at night or on Saturdays, we will have to go during the day. We will travel by MBTA or by a chartered bus, departing from Ruggles Circle at 9 A.M. and returning around 1 P.M. This will be considered part of our regularly scheduled class time. As indicated earlier, you will be required to write a memorandum and give an oral report about your observations and experiences during the last week of class.

**CASE BRIEFS:** You will be required to read and write case briefs about a number of landmark U.S. Supreme Court decisions. The content and format of the case briefs will be explained in class and also posted in the course documents on Blackboard. You will turn in your case briefs in our last week of class.

**REQUIRED READINGS AND ORAL PRESENTATIONS.** You will also be required to read, review (summarize and critique), and give an oral report on any three articles from the list of required readings that are posted on Blackboard and that I have approved in advance. Note that I do not allow the same three articles to be used by more than one student, so the sooner you claim your three articles, the better. The oral presentations, which should be no more than 15-20 minutes, will be given during the last week of class, and will be scheduled in the reverse order of claiming your articles. In other words, the first student to claim his or her three articles will be the last student to present, and the last student to claim his or her articles will be the first person to give their presentation.

**FINAL GRADE.** Your final grade will be based on 1) your written memorandum and oral presentation on your court observations from our field trips to the different courts; 2) your case briefs of the Supreme Court cases; and 3) your papers, and oral presentations on the required readings. Each will be worth one third of your grade. Final grades may be affected up to one full grade, up or down, based on your class participation.

**OFFICE HOURS.** I will be available thirty minutes before each class and after class, or by appointment at other mutually convenient times. My office is located in 401D Churchill Hall; my office phone is (617) 373-3304; and my e-mail is r.ireland@neu.edu. I welcome your calls.