

PRE-TRIAL PRACTICE SPRING 2026

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA LEVIN COLLEGE OF LAW SPRING SEMESTER SYLLABUS LAW 6320, CLASS 23151, SECTION B, 3 CREDIT HOURS

PROFESSOR: Nicholas J. Christopolis, JD, MBA
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CLASS MEETING TIME: Tuesday and Thursday, 4:30pm-5:55pm
CLASS LOCATION: HH-283

OFFICE HOURS:

Tuesday and Thursday 1:30pm-2:30pm. In addition, I make myself readily available according to your schedule. Please email me three available time blocks and we will find a mutually agreeable time either in person or by Zoom.

REQUIRED READING MATERIALS:

1. Roen & Paulsen, *Civil Litigation: Pretrial Case Development & Discovery* (2d ed.)
2. The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure
3. The Federal Rules of Evidence
4. Supplemental materials and case file materials posted on our class Canvas page.

COURSE WEBSITE: The Canvas page is the central hub for this class. You are responsible for reviewing the page for course updates and accessing course content.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

This course is designed for students who are planning to become civil litigators after graduation. More than 95% of civil cases settle before trial, so most of your legal practice will be “pre-trial” practice. The course therefore offers in-depth study and training in civil litigation up until trial, with the aim of making you practice ready. We will cover fact and theme development, pleadings, the discovery process, motion practice, depositions, settlement negotiation - and strategic decision making at each step of the process.

ABA OUT-OF-CLASS HOURS WORKLOAD REQUIREMENTS

This course complies with ABA Standard 310. ABA Standard 310 requires that students devote 120 minutes to out-of-class preparation for every “classroom hour” of in-class instruction. We will spend approximately 3 hours in class each week, requiring at least **6 hours of preparation** outside of class including reading the assigned materials, completing writing assignments, preparing for simulations, and conferring with the other members of your law firm and opposing counsel.

Please note that although this course is graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory, the workload is no less than in any graded course, including near-weekly written assignments. As for any three-credit course, the ABA requires that you spend an average of at least six hours per week of work for this course, in addition to time spent in class.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- ✓ Evaluate a new case
- ✓ Prepare claims and defenses
- ✓ Write and respond to discovery requests
- ✓ Prepare, respond to, and argue discovery motions
- ✓ Take and defend depositions
- ✓ Work with experts
- ✓ Negotiate a settlement

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING EVALUATION:

There will be no final exam in this course. Rather, at the end of the semester, I will award you a grade of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory based on the following metrics:

- Professionalism and good faith participation in discussion and simulation exercises.
- Quality of written assignments.
- Quality of performance in hands-on exercises, including motion arguments, deposition taking and defense, and negotiations.
- Preparation for class sessions.
- Attendance and punctuality (see policies below).

LAW FIRMS, LITIGATION TEAMS & GOOD FAITH PARTICIPATION

Students will be paired with two or three other students in separate “law firms” and assigned to a litigation team. Throughout the semester, you will litigate against each other using a simplified but realistic case file from the text. You will complete most written assignments in your firm as a group assignment.

Though you will be working in a team environment, you must pull your weight within your team. If I find that you are over relying or outright taking advantage of your teammates’ efforts to do work for you, I reserve the right to assign individual make-up work or assign a grade of Unsatisfactory.

PROFESSIONALISM

This course presents a valuable opportunity to practice professionalism and to begin to create and explore your own professional identity. Throughout the semester, you are expected to behave as a practicing lawyer and treat your colleagues as such.

Punctuality is part of professionalism. I will promptly begin class at the designated start time. Please be on time to class and do not leave early absent extenuating circumstances. If you have to leave during class time, please close the door quietly so as to not disturb your colleagues. As a law student and future lawyer, you are expected to conduct yourself with professionalism in the

classroom and in all course-related activities. This includes common courtesy in the classroom as well as in all email messages, threaded discussions, and chats. Please silence cell phones and computer notifications and minimize any other class disruptions.

In addition to completing any written assignment, you will need to revise and edit your documents numerous times before submitting them, just as you would in the practice of law. In all course activities, students are expected to participate in good faith. If you have questions about professionalism, do not hesitate to ask me directly during class or during a visit to my office.

As a future lawyer, it is important that you are able to engage in rigorous discourse and critical evaluation while also demonstrating civility and respect for others. I encourage you to speak thoughtfully, listen carefully, and commit to examining your own values and assumptions. All students have the right to be treated with respect by their instructors and classmates.

COMPLIANCE WITH UF HONOR CODE

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. See the UF Conduct Code website for more information. <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The UF Law Honor Code also prohibits use of artificial intelligence, unless I expressly authorize you to use it.

Regarding “Generative AI,” you may use generative AI only when I have expressly allowed you to do so in written assignment instructions or other written communication and you must follow the given instructions, precisely. At present, I consider generative AI to mean any technology tool that is a large language model that can be prompted to generate or synthesize text. Examples are Lexis+AI, CoPilot, ChatGPT (all versions), Claude, Gemini, Co-Counsel, Spellbook, and Grammarly Go. You may use tools with “Extractive AI” on all assignments. At present, I consider extractive AI to include Grammarly (spelling and grammar only, without generative AI), Word's Editor, "traditional" Lexis or Westlaw, and Google (or similar online natural language research tools). If you have a question about whether a particular tool is allowed, it is your responsibility to discuss it with me. I reserve the right to make changes to this policy, and, if I do, I will do so in writing.

When permitted to use any AI (extractive or generative), you must verify all content and citations. You are wholly responsible for doing so. You are also wholly responsible for the style, tone, and format of the document and for following any additional AI-use instructions I have provided to you for that assignment.

You must bring a laptop or tablet to every class so that you can access handouts on Canvas, participate in in-class exercises, and work on assignments. Please silence and put away cellphones, smartwatches, and similar devices before class begins. If you are using electronics to do anything not directly related to this class, I will penalize you. I may revisit or revise this policy as needed.

CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in the course are consistent with university policies. See UF Academic Regulations and Policies for more information regarding the University Attendance Policies. <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. Students are responsible for ensuring that they are not recorded as absent if they come in late.

Attendance is important in this course because it is a courtroom skills course. Although the assigned reading is essential, students cannot develop advocacy skills from reading or relying on passive learning techniques such as watching the class recording. Moreover, the course is interactive. Large portions of class time will be spent working with your law firm and litigation team members on assignments. Skipping classes in this course often creates more work for the colleagues of your law firms and litigation teams. Therefore, students are only allowed **three unexcused** absences during the semester, which can be taken at your discretion for any class sessions except for deposition days, motion hearing days, and mediation days. **For unexcused absences I do not need nor want to know your reason. Any other absences must be excused in advance as noted below.** For excused absences, your request must be made in writing. When possible, for the sake of your teammates, please make these requests at least a week in advance. However, recognizing that emergencies can and will happen, please see statement below regarding excused absences for emergencies.

Excused absences for emergencies: if you are unexpectedly ill or have other exceptional circumstances that prevent you from being in class, you must contact me prior to the start of class to request an excused absence. In the case of a true emergency that prevents you from contacting me prior to class, you must still contact me as soon as possible thereafter to request an excused absence.

Important note: because the work in this class is performed and evaluated as a team, attendance by all members of the team on deposition days, motion hearing days, and mediation days is critical. As a result, individual requests for excused absences for those class days will likely be denied, and no unexcused absences will be permitted for those class days.

POLICIES TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF SICKNESS

If you are sick, out of respect for your colleagues, please do not come to class. If you miss class due to illness, you must contact me by email prior to the start of class to request an excused absence. Or, in the case of a true emergency that prevents you from contacting me prior to class, you must contact me as soon as possible thereafter to request an excused absence

BUSINESS ATTIRE REQUIRED FOR CERTAIN CLASSES

While you may dress casually for regular class sessions, please note that business attire is required for the motion hearings, oral arguments, presentations, depositions, and mediations. Please see the course schedule below for specific dates and mark your calendars NOW. I will also do my best to remind you in advance.

RECORDING LECTURES

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal education use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and deliver by an instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course.

A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentation such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless, of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. Students can complete evaluations in three ways:

1. The email they receive from GatorEvals
2. Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals
3. The central portal at <https://my-ufl.bluera.com>

Guidance on how to provide constructive feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

STATEMENT RELATED TO ACCOMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. See the “Get Started With the DRC” webpage on the Disability Resource Center site. <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

When you are in practice, all court filings will be required to be formatted according to the applicable rules of the court. As a result, for this class all assignments are to be submitted electronically via the course Canvas website, **in Word format**. In addition to any formatting requirements specific to an assignment, documents should conform to the following: (1) the text should be double-spaced, except for the headings (which should be single-spaced); (2) all writing assignments this term should be written in **14-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with full justification so that the document has smooth edges of text**; (3) each page should be numbered (bottom, center), except for the first page; and, (4) all citations should comply with the rules of *The Bluebook*. You may use either underlining or italics for case names, but please be consistent throughout your motions and responses in opposition that you will draft in this class.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Disclaimer: *The course schedule below is only tentative.* You must check Canvas regularly for your assignments and deadlines. Our pace will depend in part on the level of interest and the level of difficulty of each section and is subject to change. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected. All readings are from the textbook, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (“FRCP”), Federal Rules of Evidence (“FRE”), and any materials I post on Canvas unless otherwise indicated.

COURSE SCHEDULE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC AND TEAM PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY (GREEN)</u>	<u>READING FOR THE WEEK</u>
WEEK 1 Tu. 1/20/26	- Introduction to the Litigation Process - Drafting Pleadings	- Syllabus - Ch. 1 - Case file and other handouts (Canvas)
Th. 1/22/26	- Investigating the File - Client Interviews	
WEEK 2 Tu. 1/27/26	Client Interviews	- Ch. 2 - FRCP 7(a), 8, 10; 11 - Case file and other handouts (Canvas)

Th. 1/29/26	Complaints	
WEEK 3 Tu. 2/3/26	Answers and Affirmative Defenses	- Ch. 3, 4 - Class handouts (Canvas)
Th. 2/5/26		
WEEK 4 Tu. 2/10/26	Motions to Dismiss	- Ch. 5, 6 - Class handouts (Canvas)
Th. 2/12/26	Pretrial Oral Advocacy	
WEEK 5 Tu. 2/17/26	Hearings on Motion to Dismiss	N/A
Th. 2/19/26	Hearings on Motion to Dismiss	
WEEK 6 Tu. 2/24/26	Propounding Written Discovery Requests and Rule 26 Disclosures	- Ch. 7 - FRCP 26(a)(1), 26(b)(1)-(2), 26(g), 33, 34, 36 - Class handouts (Canvas)
Th. 2/26/26	Propounding Written Discovery Requests and Rule 26 Disclosures	
WEEK 7 Tu. 3/3/26	Responding to Written Discovery	- Ch. 12 - FRCP 26(a)(1) & 26(b)(5) - Class handouts (Canvas)
Th. 3/5/26	Privilege Logs and Objections	
WEEK 8 Tu. 3/10/26	Discovery Disputes & Motion Practice	- Ch. 13, 14 - FRCP 7(b), 11, 26(b)(2)(C), 26(c), 36(a)(6), 37 - Class handouts (Canvas)

Th. 3/12/26	Prepare for Hearings on Motion for Protective Order or Motion to Compel	
WEEK 10 Tu. 3/24/26	Hearings on Motion for Protective Order and/or Motion to Compel	N/A
Th. 3/26/26	Hearings on Motion for Protective Order and/or Motion to Compel	
WEEK 11 Tu. 3/31/26	Introduction to Depositions	- Ch. 8 - FRCP 30, 32 - Class handouts (Canvas)
Th. 4/2/26	Introduction to Depositions	
WEEK 12 Tu. 4/7/26	- Expert Witnesses - Compulsory Medical Examinations	- Ch. 9 - FRCP 26 & 35; FRE 702-704 - Class handouts (Canvas)
Th. 4/9/26	Daubert Challenges	
WEEK 13 Tu. 4/14/26	Depositions	N/A
Th. 4/16/26	Depositions	
WEEK 14 Tu. 4/21/26	- Mediation - Case Valuation - Proposals for Settlement	- Ch. 11, 15 - FRCP 26(a)(3) & 56 - Class handouts (Canvas)

Th. 4/23/26	LAST CLASS! Mediation Openings	
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ACADEMIC AND WELLNESS RESOURCES:

- E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at [352-392-4357](tel:352-392-4357) or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- [Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, [352-392-1601](tel:352-392-1601). Career assistance and counseling services.
- [Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. Call [866-281-6309](tel:866-281-6309) or email ask@ufl.libanswers.com for more information.
- [Academic Resources](#): 1317 Turlington Hall, Call [352-392-2010](tel:352-392-2010), or to make a private appointment: [352-392-6420](tel:352-392-6420). Email contact: teaching-center@ufl.edu. General study skills and tutoring.
- [Writing Studio](#): Daytime (9:30am-3:30pm): 2215 Turlington Hall, [352-846-1138](tel:352-846-1138) | Evening (5:00pm-7:00pm): 1545 W University Avenue (Library West, Rm. 339). Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- Academic Complaints: Office of the Ombuds; [Visit the Complaint Portal webpage for more information.](#)
- Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions): [View the Student Complaint Procedure webpage for more information.](#)
- UF Student Success Initiative: Visit <https://studentsuccess.ufl.edu/> for resources that support your success as a UF student.
- [Public Speaking Lab](#): (Dial Center, 501 Rolfs Hall). Offering online and in-person help developing, organizing, and practicing oral presentations. Contact email: publicspeakinglab@clas.ufl.edu.
- UF Whole Gator Resources: Visit <https://one.ufl.edu/whole-gator/discover> for resources that are designed to help you thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally at UF.