

# Trial Practice

## University of Florida Levin College of Law

Spring 2026 Syllabus  
LAW 6363 / Class Number 27249 / Section C

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### CONTACT INFORMATION

Professor Brian Kramer

Email: [kramerb@sao8.org](mailto:kramerb@sao8.org);

Phone: 352-374-3686 (work), 352-577-4370 (cell / text)

Meeting Times: Mondays 6:30 – 7:25 p.m.

Tuesdays 1:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Meeting Location: MLAC 106

Mandatory Final Trials (*All students must be present, in person, for each day of the final trials, even if not presenting.*)

Round 1: April 17-18 (Rounds 1-3)

Round 2: April 24-25 (Rounds 4-6)

UFLCL Office: MLAC 106

UFLCL Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:15-1:15 p.m.

Office: 120 West University Ave.

Office Hours: Wednesday 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

*Additional Office Hours:* Professor Kramer is available by appointment both at the UFLCL and the Office of the State Attorney, 120 West University Avenue, Gainesville, by phone (with or without an appointment), and video teleconference. Students are welcomed and encouraged to meet with Professor Kramer.

### Course Description and Objectives

This course covers trial procedures and advocacy techniques, including jury selection, opening statements, direct examinations, cross examinations, objections and other motion practice, preservation of error, closing arguments, and proper courtroom demeanor. Using realistic fact patterns and full trial assignments, students will learn by doing.

### Purpose of Course

The purpose of this course is to provide strong entry-level courtroom skills together with an understanding of effective preparation for trial and an awareness of various persuasive methods.

Courtroom skills include effective communication, effective advocacy in each phase of a trial, making and meeting objections, raising, and addressing other issues by way of motions, and proper preservation of error. Students develop the knowledge and skills necessary for effective trial advocacy through a combination of study, observation, discussion, and (most importantly) mock trial exercises, with helpful critique and feedback.

### **Course Goals and Objectives**

1. The development of courtroom communication skills.
2. An understanding of the structure and function of each part of a trial.
3. The development of strong entry-level advocacy skills and techniques.
4. The development of understanding and experience in making and meeting objections.
5. Developing familiarity with case analysis and trial preparation.
6. Understanding professionalism and best practices in the context of courtroom conduct.

### **Desired Learning Outcomes**

1. The student has developed courtroom communication skills.
2. The student understands the structure and function of each part of a trial.
3. The student has strong entry-level advocacy skills and technique.
4. The student understands how to make and meet objections and possesses simulation-based experience as preparation for entry level advocacy.
5. The student is familiar with the process of case analysis and trial preparation.
6. The student understands professionalism in the context of trial advocacy.

### **Textbook and Course Materials:**

- (1) *Trying Cases: Promise, Prove, and Persuade*, (J. Zedalis, Vandephas Publishing) (also available as an e-book)
- (2) Workshop/Trial Coursebook: available for this course on CANVAS
- (3) Florida Evidence Code Summary Trial Guide (available at the Levin College of Law Bookstore)
- (4) Case Summaries for Trial Preparation (provided by the Professor)

Other Good Resources (not required):

Carlson, A Student's Guide to Elements of Proof (Thomson West)  
Ehrhardt, Florida Evidence  
Ehrhardt, Florida Trial Objections.  
McElhaney, Trial Notebook (ABA)

### **Assigned Reading and Preparation**

Students are required to do the assigned reading and participate in discussions well as assigned skills exercises. The reading assignments are brief and to the point. This course will be taught in a lab/workshop structure. Students are required to prepare for all in-class presentations prior to the commencement of the class for which that presentation will occur. A written or electronic copy of each student's preparation for that day's class must be provided to the professor prior to the start of class.

### **ABA Out of Class Hours Requirements**

ABA Standard 310 calls for 120 minutes of preparation for each hour of classroom instruction. This course is a 3-credit course. Trial practice has both classroom and simulation components. It is expected that over the course of the 13-week semester, students will spend at least 78 hours engaged in the following activities: Study, planning, research, and preparation of workshop and trial materials, review (of recorded work), observation and critical reflection in courtroom proceedings, and preparation for assigned witness and critique roles.

### **Attendance**

Attendance in class is required by both the ABA and the Law School. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. Students are allowed no unexcused absences during the semester and final trials. Students are responsible for ensuring that they are not recorded as absent if they come in late. A student who fails to meet the attendance requirement will be dropped from the course. The law school's policy on attendance can be found [here](#). Attendance is important for this course because it is a courtroom skills course. The course is interactive. Although the assigned reading is essential, students cannot develop advocacy skills from reading or relying on passive learning techniques. Absences must be excused in advance.

When a student misses a class, either excused or unexcused, to remain in the course, the student is required to 1) view the recorded lecture portion of the class missed; 2) provide a written evaluation of the recorded lecture demonstrating comprehension of the subject matter, and 3) present the demonstration portion of the class to the instructor during the next office hour at UFLCL. The student shall be responsible for obtaining another class member or teaching assistant to assist in the presentation.

Failure to attend all, or any portion, of the Final Trials, both as a litigant and as a witness, shall be sufficient grounds, in and of itself, for the awarding of the grade of "U".

Classes cancelled due to holidays, emergencies, natural disasters, or for any other reason will be rescheduled by the instructor. Attendance is mandatory unless that class conflicts with another scheduled UFLCL class or mandatory attendance event.

### **Grading**

3 Credits, S+ / S / U

To achieve a satisfactory grade, students must maintain strong attendance and must prepare for and actively participate in the workshops and final trials. All students will be required to participate as a witness, juror, and courtroom personnel in both class and final trials in addition to their lawyer/case assignments. Competence, preparation, and attendance as a witness, juror, and courtroom personnel are considered in grading. The law school grading policy is available [here](#).

To achieve an S+ grade, students must satisfy all the requirements above and must demonstrate the following: thorough and thoughtful preparation of assignments; exceptional preparation and performance during final trials; and active classroom participation.

### **In-Class Participation / Use of Electronic Devices**

The class is divided into 2 hours of practical exercises and 1 hour of instruction. Students are required to actively participate in both instruction and practical exercises. Participation during practical exercises includes both presenting, observing, and critiquing the exercises and practice trials.

During instruction, students are permitted to use electronic devices. Use of electronic devices for recording instruction is governed by the recording policy below. During practical exercises, students may not use electronic devices except as necessary during presentation of the assigned exercise by the student(s) actively presenting. For example, the use of a computer, tablet, or phone is permissible while a student is conducting an examination of a witness or presenting a closing argument. Students observing and critiquing such presentations may not use electronic devices. Use of an electronic device includes having such a device visible to either the student or the professor.

During practical exercise portion of the class, students are permitted to excuse themselves from the classroom to use an electronic device when necessary.

### **Final Trials**

Final Trial Dates for Spring 2026 are scheduled for April 17-18 and April 24-25. **All students must be present for each day of the final trials, even if they are not presenting or serving as a witness.** All students will have assigned roles to be played in each trial. Students should be prepared and available to play those roles at any time during the final trial period.

### **Prerequisite Knowledge and Skills**

Evidence must be taken prior to or in the same semester as trial practice.

### **Course Evaluations**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Click [here](#) for

guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and may complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students [here](#).

### **Other information about UF Levin College of Law policies**

Other information about UF Levin College of Law policies, including compliance with the UF Honor Code, Grading, Accommodations, Class Recordings, and Course Evaluations can be found at this link: <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/427635/files?preview=98226140>

### **UF academic policies and resources:**

Other information about UF academic policies and resources can be found at [this link](#).

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL TRIAL PRACTICE STUDENTS**

### **Dressing for Exercises / Practice Trials / Final Trials:**

Courtroom attire is required for the PRACTICE TRIALS AND FINAL TRIALS. “Courtroom attire” is strictly business formal/professional, not business casual, reflecting seriousness and respect for the judicial process.

During exercise classes, and for witness or critiquing roles at trial, students may wear “business casual clothing.” “Business casual” balances professionalism with comfort, creating an environment suitable for academic engagement and potential professional interactions. All clothing should be clean, well-fitted, and project a professional appearance. If there are any doubts regarding the appropriateness of a specific item of clothing, consult with the instructor. Err on the side of being more formal if uncertainty persists. Certain clothing items are clearly outside of the parameters of “business casual.” These items include: Tee shirts, jeans, athletic wear, shorts, tennis shoes, flip flops, and any clothing intended to communicate with words or images other than the branding of the item, which should be modestly displayed, if at all.

### **Witness Roles:**

Each student will be assigned a witness role for the trials. All witnesses are expected to be well prepared.

### **Self-review and critique required work with teaching assistants:**

Workshops on direct exam, cross exam, expert witnesses, and opening/closing will be recorded, and students are required to review their own performances. Additionally, each student is required to review their recorded performances with an assigned advanced student. Details will be explained in class.

### **Preparation:**

All students are expected to prepare for and complete their assigned advocacy exercises. The final trials are considered a skills course equivalent of final exams, and participation is mandatory. Participation includes assigned witness and critiquing roles as well as assigned trial roles. All students participate in each trial round.

### **Accommodations: (UF Policy)**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodations. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### **Academic Honesty: (UF Policy)**

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php>

### **Class Recording Policy:**

All classes will be recorded via Mediasite in case students must miss class for health reasons. The Office of Student Affairs will work with faculty to determine when students may have access to these recordings, and the recordings will be password protected. It is the student's responsibility to contact the Office of Student Affairs as soon as possible after an absence.

### **Course Schedule**

Classes will be divided into a two-hour trial skill exercise block with Prof. Kramer and a one-hour block of instruction by various professors or guest lecturers. Exercises will follow from the previous class instruction as set forth below. There are no exercises for the first class.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Part No</b>	<b>Exercises (Tuesdays 1:15 – 3:15)</b>	<b>Lecture (Mondays 6:30 – 7:30)</b>
1/20/2026	0	Introduction to Trial Practice / Direct Examination	
1/26/2026	1		Cross Examination
1/27/2026	1	Direct Examination Exercise	
2/2/2026	2		Exhibits and Visual Aids
2/3/2026	2	Cross Examination Exercise	
2/9/2026	3		Expert Witnesses and Case Strategy
2/10/2026	3	Exhibits and Visual Aides	

2/16/2026	4		Voir Dire
2/17/2026	4	Expert Witnesses	
2/23/2026	5		Opening Statement
2/24/2026	5	Voir Dire	
3/2/2026	6		Closing Argument
3/3/2026	6	Opening Statement	
3/9/2026	7		Trial Strategy
3/10/2026	7	Closing Argument	
3/16/2026			Spring Break (No Class)
3/17/2026		Spring Break (No Class)	
3/23/2026			Practice Final Trial (Rd 1, Hr 1)
3/24/2026		Practice Final Trial (Rd 1, Hr 2-3)	
3/30/2026			Practice Final Trial (Rd 2, Hr 1)
3/31/2026		Practice Final Trial (Rd 2, Hr. 2-3)	
4/6/2026			Practice Final Trial (Rd 3, Hr 1)
4/7/2026		Practice Final Trial (Rd 3, Hr 2-3)	
4/13/2026			Rules of Competition
4/14/2026		Final Trial Preparation	
4/17/2026	Friday	Final Trial (Round 1)	4:00 – 8:00
4/18/2026	Saturday	Final Trials (Rounds 2 & 3)	8:30 – 5:00
4/20/2026			Issues and Review of Rounds 1-3
4/21/2026		Switching Sides – New Issues	
4/24/2026	Friday	Final Trial (Round 4)	4:00 – 8:00
4/25/2026	Saturday	Final Trials (Rounds 5 & 6)	8:30 – 5:00

## **PART 1: Introduction to Trial Practice**

### ***Part 1: Introduction & Course Overview:***

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| 1 | <p>Required Reading: Pages v, vi, (Forward) and 1-17 (Preparing for Trial; Command of the Courtroom); and pages 52-75 (Direct Examination) in <u>Trying Cases</u>.</p> <p>The jury trial is the ultimate forum for justice. Trials are a search for truth, a search for justice, a method of dispute resolution, a form of closure, or all the above. We will</p> |
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	<p>consider the goal of persuasion as well as the mechanics of advocacy at each stage. This course focuses on skills necessary for excellent courtroom practice.</p> <p>Although this is a trial course, keep in mind what comes before-- Lawyers should prepare for trial by exhausting every avenue of discovery. This is the way issues are framed and plans are developed to prove claims or defenses and challenge the other party's case. Ask yourselves this: What do we need to prove or challenge? How do we prove or challenge it? Who has the burden of proof? How do we make it interesting? How do we appeal to the jury's sense of justice? What is the story in this case? How can we make the case easy for the jurors?</p> <p>Lawyers must understand the purposes and goals of each part of the trial before they can excel at any level.</p> <p>First Class: A broad overview of the jury trial and warm-ups. Key Words: Language, word choice, tone, emphasis, open-ended questions, closed (leading) questions, listening, fair argument, relevance, protecting your client.</p>
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<b>PART 2: Relevance, Proof, and Storytelling: Preparing and Presenting Key Witnesses</b>	
	<p>Lawyers question their own witnesses and introduce other forms of evidence during direct examination. The sum of a party's direct exam evidence is the "case in chief". A skilled advocate presents witnesses in a straight-forward and engaging style. A direct exam is like a slightly formal interview. All evidence must be relevant and admissible. For this reason, good trial lawyers are prepared to address relevance and other issues like hearsay.</p> <p>How do we present our proof and our client's story in a proper, clear, and interesting manner?</p> <p>Be prepared to conduct direct examinations in Problems #1 and #2 in Trial Practice Cases and Materials, <i>State of Florida v. Sheila Menlo</i> and <i>State of Florida v. Cynthia Baker</i>.</p> <p><i>Required Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Pages 130-161 (Making and Meeting Objections)</li> </ul>



### **PART 3: Cross Examination**

We will work on cross examination by considering our goals-- discrediting, impeaching, and exposing weaknesses in the opposing side's case.

Techniques for controlling the witness and maintaining the focus of the cross examination will be considered. We will address scope of cross. Foundations and methods of impeachment will be discussed.

We will also discuss objections, beginning with relevance. We will consider other common issues like hearsay and improper impeachment.

Be prepared to conduct direct and cross examinations in:

Problems # 3 and #4 in Trial Practice Cases and Materials, *Winthrop v. Preston's Tree Service* and *State of Florida v. Strong*.

*Required Readings:*

- Pages 76-99 (Cross Examination)

### **PART 4: Exhibits and Visual Aids**

*Required Readings:* Pages 100-110 (Laying Foundations)

Evidence comes in many forms, such as documents, pictures, audio and video recordings, substances, x-rays, charts, diagrams, firearms, and any other item that has relevance. All visual elements are important in trial, whether they are technically admitted as evidence. Everything the jury can see has significance.

Foundations for moving items into evidence should become second nature to a trial lawyer. It is helpful to view foundation as a sort of courtroom mini quiz to test relevance and reliability. We will begin with the basic foundations for tangible items, pictures, diagrams, and writings.

	Students will work on laying the proper foundation (with a qualified witness) in assigned problems.
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<b>PART 5: Expert Witnesses and Case Strategy</b>	
	<p>Reading: pages 111-125 (Expert Witnesses)</p> <p>Lawyers rely heavily on experts in various fields. A properly qualified expert is often needed to give opinions on causation, medical procedures, forensic testing and comparison, and any other area that calls for specialized knowledge. Lawyers need to be skilled in handling expert witnesses. They must understand how to properly qualify an expert through proper foundation, how to present the expert's opinions, and how to challenge opposing expert testimony.</p> <p>We will consider preparing and calling expert witnesses, laying proper foundations for expert opinion testimony, and potential objections. A simple fact pattern will be assigned, and students will work on directs and crosses of an expert witness.</p> <p><u>Additional Week Five Topic: Protecting Your Client and Your Record</u></p> <p>To protect a client's right to a fair trial, a lawyer must ask the court to exclude irrelevant or otherwise inadmissible evidence. We will discuss various types of motions and procedures for making objections pretrial and during trial.</p> <p>We will have an intensive objections class. Students will listen to closing arguments and practice making and responding to objections (this is a FUN!) We will also discuss Pretrial Conferences and Civility.</p>

<b>PART 6: Voir Dire</b>	
	Reading: Pages 18-35

	<p>We will consider the goals and the process of jury selection, and ways in which lawyers can best serve the interests of clients at this stage of a trial. Basic procedures and juror questionnaires will be discussed.</p> <p>Trial assignments will be posted prior to this class so all students have a chance to think about voir dire in their assigned trial cases. The trial practice cases are all “filed” in state court, so state court rules and codes govern the proceedings.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Who are the potential jurors and</li> <li>(2) How will they react to the case?</li> <li>(3) How do we intelligently exercise our challenges?</li> </ol> <p>Jury selection involves careful listening and observation, pre-supposing that a lawyer is skilled in getting jurors to express themselves. We must know the potential jurors well enough to make an educated guess about their reactions to the people and the facts of the case. Thorough and accurate case analysis is a critical pre-requisite to a lawyer’s decision-making during jury selection. Students will conduct voir dire on behalf of their respective clients. “Senior” partners will be present to assist.</p>
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## **PART 7: Opening Statement and Closing Argument**

	<p>Reading: 37-51; 157-161</p> <p>What do the jurors need to hear from us <i>before</i> we present our case? Jurors want to know what happened and who is responsible for it. They want to know what the big issues are. They want to be interested and engaged at the outset. We will discuss ways of opening the case in the best manner possible.</p> <p>What do jurors need to hear from us <i>after</i> all the evidence is admitted? Closing is the time to argue the merits of the case. How should the case be decided, and why? What are the best arguments to make based on the facts and the law? How can we discredit or neutralize the other side’s case?</p> <p>The theme of a case is the universal human factor that lies naturally in the story. Lawyers need to recognize and convey themes to jurors as a proper way of allowing shared human experience to inform deliberations. Themes can be powerful.</p> <p>We will discuss persuasion. We want each of you to possess this ability.</p> <p>Be prepared to conduct opening statements and closing arguments on behalf of your clients.</p>
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#### **PART 8: Practice Trials**

ALL Students will be involved in each practice trial for weeks Eight, Nine, and Ten. The practice trials are held during the regular weekly workshop timeframe. In each practice trial, students will either be a lawyer a witness, or a juror.

#### **Final Trials are Friday all day / Saturday morning**

#### **The Dates are**

#### **Final Trials and Final Weeks of Class**

All students participate in each round of the trials (students try cases, perform witness roles, and critique).

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#### **First Trial Weekend:**

Friday, April 17	4:00 pm	Trial and Critique, Round I.
Saturday, April 18	8:30 am	Trial and Critique, Round II.
Saturday, April 18	1:00 Pm	Trial and Critique, Round III.

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#### **Second Final Trial Weekend:**

Friday, April 24	4:00 pm	Trial and Critique, Round IV.
Saturday, April 25	8:30 am	Trial and Critique, Round V.
Saturday, April 25	1:00 Pm	Trial and Critique, Round VI.

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