

Judicial Systems & Practices

CRJU 2933

Fall 2026

Syllabus and Course Schedule

Contact Information:

Judge Jeff McKnight

Email: jeff.mcknight@msutexas.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

Class Information:

Tuesdays 6:00 pm to 8:50 pm

Martin Building, Room 108

Course Material: No book is necessary for this class.

Course Description: This course will introduce you to the judicial process and courts system in the United States. Emphasis will be placed on the judicial system within the context of the criminal justice system. We will study the organization of the legal system, the actors of the legal system, and the procedure of the legal system.

Course Objectives: While entertaining, the portrayal of the criminal justice system on television is not accurate. The objective of this course is to provide an accurate picture of America's Courts and how the criminal justice system works within the structure of the court system, from start to finish.

Attendance Policy: You are expected to attend all class meetings, following the university attendance policy. Attendance **will** be taken and **will** be a part of your grade. If you are tardy, it will be counted as an absence. Just as absences and tardiness are unacceptable in the professional world, it is equally unacceptable in this class.

Absences will be dealt with in accordance with the Class Attendance Policy as contained in the Midwestern State University Student Handbook; including, but not limited to, dropping a student from a class for excessive absences.

It will be very difficult to pass this course without attending class. Therefore, if you miss more than three (3) classes throughout the semester, you will receive an automatic “F” for the course. If a class absence is unavoidable, you must obtain written approval from the professor prior to missing class. The determination of what constitutes an excused absence is solely within the discretion of the professor.

Decorum: You are expected to conduct yourself in a professional and respectful manner. You are a representative of this class and Midwestern State University and should act accordingly.

Integrity: Honesty and integrity are of the utmost importance in the professional world. These attributes will also be a pillar of this class. As you work towards your career in the criminal justice system, you must understand that your livelihood, and people’s freedom, depend on your integrity. A reputation takes a lifetime to achieve, and seconds to destroy.

Each student is expected to abide by the rules of ethical and academic honesty as contained in the Midwestern State University Student Handbook. All cases of academic dishonesty, cheating or other unethical behavior will result in an automatic “F” for the course and a letter to be directed to the Dean of Students for further disciplinary action.

Electronic Devices: The use of cell phones and other electronic devices is strictly prohibited in the classroom. If you wish to use an electronic device for purposes related to the class, prior written permission must be obtained from the professor.

Prior to entering the classroom, all cell phones must be turned off. If any phone or electronic device rings or otherwise disrupts the class, the owner of said phone will be required to leave class and an absence will be entered for their attendance. Texting or using an electronic device in an

unapproved manner will result in the deduction of one (1) letter grade from your final course grade.

Audio and/or video recording any portion of the course is strictly prohibited without prior written approval of the professor. Any person found to be recording any portion of the course, without prior written permission will be receive an automatic “F” for the course.

The use of any transcription program and/or artificial intelligence program is strictly prohibited. Any person found to be utilizing any transcription program and/or artificial intelligence program will receive an automatic “F” for the course.

Class Preparation and Participation: Preparation, attendance and participation are expected. Failure to prepare, failure to attend, and failure to participate will adversely affect your final grade. You must come to class prepared to discuss the materials to be addressed in accordance with the course schedule. You should be prepared for each class in a manner that allows you to ask appropriate questions, answer questions or engage in dialogue with the professor or other classmates regarding the topics to be addressed. Remember, your participation will be counted as part of your final grade.

D2L: The use of supplemental D2L is required for this course. D2L is the official means of communication for this class. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have a working knowledge of the features of D2L. You are responsible for checking the D2L system for course-related information.

Food and Drinks: Food is prohibited in the classroom and during class times. Drinks may be brought in the classroom; however, drinks may not be shared.

Tests: Tests may include multiple choice, short answer, essay or any other method of testing your knowledge of the materials covered throughout this course. You must be prepared that each test will require a scantron;

therefore, you must bring a scantron to each test. A scantron will not be provided for you.

Grading Policy: The following factors will be considered when calculating a student's grade.

Attendance:	10%
Participation	10%
Exams:	80%--each exam will be equally weighted

Grading Scale: The following grading scale will be utilized:

100-90	= A
89-80	= B
79-70	= C
69-60	= D
59 and below	= F

[remainder of this page intentionally left blank]

Course Schedule

August 25th: Court Organization

- Class Introduction
- Course Syllabus and Schedule
- Courts, Crime and Controversy
- Law and Crime

September 1st: Court Organization

- Federal Courts
- State Courts

September 8th: NO CLASS

September 15th: Court Organization

- Appellate Courts and Habeas Corpus
- Exam Review

September 22nd:

- **Exam #1**

September 29th: Participants

- The Dynamics of Courthouse Justice
- Defendants, Victims and Witnesses

October 6th: Participants

- Prosecutors
- Defense Attorneys
- Judges
- Exam Review

October 13th:

- **Exam #2**

October 20th: Preliminary/Pretrial Procedures

- From Arrest through Arraignment
- Disclosing and Suppressing Evidence
- Negotiations and the Plea of Guilty
- Exam Review

October 27th:

- **Exam #3**

November 3rd: The Trial

- Trials and Juries

November 10th: Sentencing

- Sentencing Options
- Sentencing Decisions
- Juvenile Courts
- Exam Review

November 17th:

- **Exam #4**
- **AFTER CLASS, EXAMS WILL BE GRADED AND FURTHER DISCUSSION WILL OCCUR.**

December 1st:

- **Exam #5**--Exam #5 will be a comprehensive exam of materials from the entire semester.