

**University of Arkansas – Fort Smith 5210 Grand Avenue
P.O. Box 3649
General Syllabus**

CRJU 39373 Courts Systems and Practices

Credit Hours: 3

Lecture Hours: 3

Laboratory Hours: 0

Prerequisite or corequisite: ENGL 1213/ENGL 10203 Composition II or RHET 2863/ENGL 24103 Advanced Composition
Effective Catalog: 2025-2026

I. Course Information

A. Catalog Description:

This course provides an overview of the U.S. criminal court system, focusing on its structure, roles, and jurisdictions. Students will examine the trial process, key courtroom participants, and the influence of discretion on case outcomes. The course also covers Constitutional Amendments, their implications, and potential areas for reform.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

A. Subject Matter

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Construct an overview of and evaluate the structure of the U.S. criminal court system and its jurisdictions, assessing how these components function within the overall legal framework.
2. Investigate the dynamics of the courtroom workgroup by illustrating the interactions among key actors in the U.S. criminal justice court system, including judges, juries, defense attorneys, and prosecutors, and evaluate their impact on the court system.
3. Discuss and critically assess key issues related to the Constitutional Amendments and their implications for criminal procedure, drawing connections to relevant case law and contemporary practices.
4. Critique the trial process from pretrial through sentencing, identifying potential areas for reform and discussing how discretion can influence case outcomes

B. University Learning Outcomes

This course enhances student abilities in the following areas:

Analytical Skills: Students will identify problems/issues and develop solutions/analysis.

Communication Skills (written and oral)

Students will communicate proficiently. Students will use essay format for written presentation of research projects and discuss particular aspects of various topics.

Ethical Decision Making

Students will model ethical decision-making processes. Students will examine ethical dilemmas within the law enforcement investigation and arrests and develop ethical frameworks to resolve specific ethical issues.

Global and Cultural Perspectives

Students will reflect upon cultural differences and their implications for interacting with people from cultures other than their own

III. Major Course Topics

- A. Structure of the federal and state criminal court systems
- B. The courtroom workgroup and the key actors in the U.S. criminal justice court system
- C. Discretionary areas within court systems
- D. The trial process from pretrial through sentencing
- E. Constitutional Amendments and their implications on case outcomes