

**FALL 2026**  
**PUBP 4803**  
**Special Topic: MOCK TRIAL**

Syllabus

**3.0 credit hours, Fall 2026**  
**Tuesdays 5:00pm – 7:45pm in Rich Building**  
**Professor McNeil: [wmcneil6@gatech.edu](mailto:wmcneil6@gatech.edu)**  
**Office Hours: See Navigate360**

**Suggested Book**

*Mock Trials: Preparing, Presenting, and Winning Your Case*, Steven Lubet, Jill Trumbull-Harris, ISBN: 1-55681-713-4

Note: Any edition is fine—if you can find an older version cheaper, buy it.

**Course Goals**

This course seeks to increase your proficiency in trial advocacy—both in your knowledge of the Rules of Evidence and knowledge of how legal precedent operates in a trial court setting, as well as your ability to make strategic legal decisions and effectively present a case to a jury.

All assignments for this course either directly overlap with the work that you, as a member of Georgia Tech Mock Trial, will already be doing, or are designed to benefit the team. However, we will be holding you to a higher standard of workmanship and knowledge since this is an upper division for-credit class.

Keep in mind—we are available to help you, and we want you to succeed. If you're having trouble with anything in the course, please contact Instructor McNeil!

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance is mandatory for regularly scheduled class sessions, which will be on Tuesdays, from **5:00 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.**

To excuse an absence from regularly scheduled class sessions, **prior written notice** (email is fine) must be given to Instructor McNeil and should include an explanation of the circumstances warranting your absence. For unanticipated absences, where there is no opportunity to give prior notice, proof of extenuating circumstances will be necessary to avoid receiving an unexcused absence. Attendance is crucial because the class only meets once a week, and class content will be unavailable elsewhere.

**Class Preparation and Participation**

Class preparation and class participation will constitute the main portion of your grade. As stated above, the work for the class should largely overlap with the work you will already be doing as a GTMT team member. The class will only differ in three ways: (1) deadlines will be more rigid, (2)

the quality of work expected will be higher, and (3) a letter grade will be provided based on your performance in the class assignments and your participation.

Mock trial is an activity that balances preparation skills with improvisational skills. The class will reward both aspects of mock trial performance. If you show up ready and willing to participate, you'll do fine.

### **Grading**

Your course grade will be out of 1000 points total, made up of these components:

**(1) Class participation (400 points), (2) Homework (300 points), and (3) In-class tests (300 points).**

We have twelve class sessions, and while attendance is not a part of your grade, poor attendance may hurt your grade. On your **third** and each subsequent unexcused absence, you will lose **THIRTY** points from your final grade.

Class participation will be based on willingness to contribute, preparation, and improvement, as well as on mock trial skill. You will be participating during regular class sessions. This class will NOT be focused on pure lecturing; rather, as the class participation component of the grading scale emphasizes, the instructors and students will be actively engaged in exercises relevant to class topics.

Homework will have clear grading criteria—either from examples of high-caliber work, or from an explanation of what we are looking for from the assignment.

Tests will be multiple choice and short answers. We will have a test of your knowledge of the facts in the case packet, worth 100 points, and a test on the Rules of Evidence worth 200 points.

### **Honor Code**

The Honor Code as set forth in the Georgia Tech General Catalog applies to all aspects of this course. You are not to collaborate in any way with any person at any time on any assignment, quiz, exam, or exercise of any kind for this course unless the professor specifically authorizes you to do so. Doing such is a violation of the GT Academic Honor Code. Submitting any work other than your own is also a violation of the Academic Honor Code. Cheating off another person's test or quiz is unethical and unacceptable. Cheating off anyone else's work is a direct violation of the GT Academic Honor Code and will be dealt with accordingly. Unauthorized use of any previous semester course materials, such as tests, quizzes, homework, projects, or any other coursework, is prohibited in this course. Using these materials will be considered a direct violation of academic policy and will be dealt with according to the GT Academic Honor Code.

Plagiarizing is defined by Webster's as "to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own: use (another's production) without crediting the source." Quote and attribute any words that are not your own. If caught plagiarizing, you will be dealt with according to the GT Academic Honor Code. For any questions involving these or any other Academic Honor Code issues, please consult the professor or read the Georgia Tech Academic Honor Code at <http://www.honor.gatech.edu/plugins/content/index.php?id=9#article2>.

Additional information can be found in the student code of conduct at <http://www.osi.gatech.edu/uploads/files/StudentCodeofConduct.pdf> and student-faculty expectations at <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22.php>.

## **Schedule**

### **CLASS 1— Tuesday August 25**

**CLASS TOPIC:** General overview of mock trial, the syllabus and of the case packet.

**HOMEWORK:**

Read the case packet, and write **100-200 words** on each of the following questions (roughly one page each):

“What are the strengths and weaknesses of the plaintiff’s case?”

“What are the strengths and weaknesses of the defense’s case?”

Submit these assignments via Canvas by **Monday, August 31, at 11:59 p.m.** (20 points each, **40 points total**)

### **CLASS 2—Tuesday, September 1**

**CLASS TOPIC:** Case preparation; Breakdown of AMTA case problem.

**HOMEWORK:**

For **each** witness, identify and explain the favorable and unfavorable facts for BOTH sides of the case. Submit these assignments via Canvas by Monday, **September 7 at 11:59 p.m. (50 points total).**

### **CLASS 3 —Tuesday, September 8**

**NEW MEMBER SCRIMMAGE**

Note: Consider all scrimmages like you would any large, graded assignment; you will receive a class participation grade for your performance and attendance.

**HOMEWORK:**

Identify from the GTMT video library on Google Drive an opening statement from anything available (from any videoed scrimmage, practice, tournament, etc. opening statement) that you will be breaking down and analyzing for the upcoming class on Tuesday September 16<sup>th</sup>. Notify Instructor McNeil by **Monday, September 14 at 11:59 p.m.** which opening you will be analyzing in the next class per the syllabus below. **(25 points)**

### **CLASS 4—Tuesday, September 15**

**CLASS TOPIC:** Opening statements. For this class, the instructors will do a brief introduction to opening statements. Then each student will present and analyze their opening statement per the previous homework assignment for what worked, what didn't, what was missed, what was done well, etc.

**HOMEWORK:**

Identify from the GTMT video library on Google Drive a closing argument from anything available (from any videoed scrimmage, practice, tournament, etc. closing argument) that you will be breaking down and analyzing for the upcoming class on Tuesday September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Notify Instructor McNeil by **Monday, September 21 at 11:59 p.m.** which closing you will be analyzing in the next class per the syllabus below. **(25 points)**

### **CLASS 5—Tuesday, September 22**

**CLASS TOPIC:** Closing arguments. For this class, the instructors will do a brief introduction to closing arguments. Then each student will present and analyze their closing argument per the previous homework assignment for what worked, what didn't, what was missed, what was done well, etc.

#### **HOMEWORK:**

Regardless of your role (attorney vs. witness) identify from the GTMT video library on Google Drive a direct examination from anything available (from any videoed scrimmage, practice, tournament, etc. direct examination) that you will be breaking down and analyzing for the upcoming class on Tuesday September 29<sup>th</sup>. Notify Instructor McNeil by **Monday, September 28 at 11:59 p.m.** which direct examination you will be analyzing in the next class per the syllabus below. **(25 points)**

### **CLASS 6—Tuesday, September 29**

**CLASS TOPIC:** Direct examinations. For this class, the instructors will do a brief introduction to direct examinations. Then each student will present and analyze their direct examination per the previous homework assignment for what worked, what didn't, what was missed, what was done well, etc.

#### **HOMEWORK:**

Regardless of your role (attorney vs. witness) identify from the GTMT video library on Google Drive a cross examination from anything available (from any videoed scrimmage, practice, tournament, etc. cross examination) that you will be breaking down and analyzing for the upcoming class on Tuesday October 14<sup>th</sup>. Notify Instructor McNeil by **Wednesday, October 7<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 p.m.** which cross examination you will be analyzing in the next class per the syllabus below. **(25 points)**

### **Tuesday, October 6 – No Class, Fall Break**

### **CLASS 7—Tuesday, October 13**

**CLASS TOPIC:** Cross examinations. For this class, the instructors will do a brief introduction to cross examinations. Then each student will present and analyze their cross examination per the previous homework assignment for what worked, what didn't, what was missed, what was done well, etc.

#### **HOMEWORK:**

**Write 150-250 words** analyzing both sides of one important objection argument in a witness that you are involved with (either as the witness or attorney examining the witness) and explain how a judge is likely to rule. Submit these assignments via Canvas by **Monday, October 19<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 p.m. (15 points)**

### **CLASS 8— Tuesday, October 20**

**CLASS TOPIC:** Objections and rules of evidence: a crash course. For this class, the instructors will do a brief introduction to objections and rules of evidence. Then each student will present and analyze their objection argument per the previous homework assignment.

**CLASS 9—Tuesday, October 27**

**CLASS TOPIC:** Impeachments, refreshments and courtroom demeanor.

**HOMEWORK:**

If you went to the u(sic)GA tournament, write **100-200 words** on the following topics:

“What did GTMT do well during the tournament? What are our weaknesses and areas for improvement?”

If you did not go to the u(sic)GA tournament, **write 100-200 words** about what changes we should make to your team’s cases-in-chief before your next tournament.

Submit these assignments via Canvas by **Monday, November 2nd, at 11:59 p.m. (25 points)**

**CLASS 10—Tuesday, November 3**

**TEST: Case Packet Test. (100 points)**

**HOMEWORK:**

If you went to the Emory tournament, write **100-200 words** on the following topics:

“What did GTMT do well during the tournament? What are our weaknesses and areas for improvement?”

If you did not go to the Emory, **write 100-200 words** about what changes we should make to your team’s cases-in-chief before your next tournament.

Submit these assignments via Canvas by **Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, at 11:59 p.m. (20 points)**

**CLASS 11—Tuesday, November 10**

**CLASS TOPIC:** Demonstratives and exhibits: how, why and when to use.

**HOMEWORK:**

If you went to Duke tournament, write **100-200 words** on the following topics:

“What did GTMT do well during the tournament? What are our weaknesses and areas for improvement?”

If you did not go to Duke, **write 100-200 words** about what changes we should make to your team’s cases-in-chief.

Submit these assignments via Canvas by **Monday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, at 11:59 p.m. (20 points)**

**CLASS 12—Tuesday, November 17**

**TEST: Rules of Evidence (200 points)**

**HOMEWORK: None**

**CLASS 13 —Tuesday, November 24**

**CLASS TOPIC:** Analysis of Fall tournaments; discussion of areas for improvement for Spring tournaments, as well as final review of proper trial practice techniques

**HOMEWORK:**

Write **150-250 words** on the following topic:

“What does GTMT need to do to prepare for the spring?”

Submit these assignments via Canvas by **Monday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, at 11:59 p.m. (30 points)**

**CLASS 14—Tuesday, December 1**

No Class.