Criminal Evidence
Fall 2026
Online

Professor: Savannah Ocasio, JD
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Course Description

This course provides an in-depth application of the federal rules of evidence and constitutional mandates in criminal proceedings. In criminal trials, the primary goal of the rules of evidence is intended to secure a defendant's constitutional right to a fair trial. Rules of evidence are not only important for the protection of the fundamental rights of the accused but also are necessary for maintaining the integrity of the criminal justice system.

CJC Prerequisite: **CJC 101**, **CJC 102, and CJC 250,** or permission from the department chairperson

Credits: 3

Course Objectives

Students will learn to:

- Describe the historical basis for the American Criminal Justice system and origins as well as the purposes and intricacies of federal evidentiary rules (FRE);
- Examine, in great detail, the roles of all players in the criminal investigations, trials and post-conviction
- Analyze the techniques used in gathering evidence for use in criminal trials and the legal rules to which techniques must conform.

Course Rationale

This course aims to better prepare our students for careers in criminal justice by providing them with the education and knowledge to deal with a variety of complex criminal-evidence-related activities in criminal justice proceedings.

Required Textbook and Readings

Garland, Norman. *Criminal Evidence, 9th Edition.*

ISBN: 9781265286736

Additional Readings provided via canvas.

University Resources

Students can benefit from free tutoring and coaching at the Learning Center, writing practice and feedback at the Writing Center, mental health assistance at the Counseling Center, assistance with basic needs at the Basic Needs Hub, and public speaking assistance at the Speaking Center

Attendance

Students should spend approximately 2-3 hours of study time for each hour spent in class.

Communication

Students are required to respect one another. Sometimes the field of criminal justice is controversial and can result in heated conversations. Students do not have to agree with one another (in fact, forming your own personal opinion is encouraged) but students must treat each other with respect.

> Freedom of Expression: In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State Community, we treat each person in the Ball State community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University's Statement on Freedom of Expression, the resources on Ball State's Freedom of Expression webpage, and Ball State's Beneficence Pledge.

Email Requirements: All course-related email communication with your professor must be sent through Canvas. Please do not email your professor directly at their personal or institutional email address.

Title IX

Ball State University is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment—including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, please know that you are not alone. The University offers support services and resources. For more information or to report an incident, please visit bsu.edu/titleix or contact the Title IX Coordinator at 765-285-1545 or at titleix@bsu.edu

As your instructor, I am a mandatory reporter under the Title IX policy and required to report any information I receive about possible sexual harassment. This includes information shared in class discussions, assignments, or private conversations.

What happens after I report? The Title IX Coordinator will email the person who experienced sexual harassment (complainant) and invite them to schedule a meeting. If the complainant **chooses** to meet with the Title IX Coordinator,

- Title IX Coordinator will offer supportive measures (e.g., counseling, extensions on deadlines, course-related adjustments, changes to work or class schedules, and/or referrals to campus offices), review the policy, and discuss options to move forward.
- If a complaint is filed by the complainant or the University, an investigation will begin following University policy.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the university community. Academic dishonesty and other forms of academic misconduct threaten the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and will not be tolerated. To maintain its credibility and reputation, and to equitably assign evaluations of scholastic and creative performance, Ball State University is committed to maintaining a climate that upholds and values the highest standards of academic integrity. Visit the VPAA's academic integrity website (Students tab) for resources on understanding academic integrity, citing sources properly, and avoiding inadvertent academic dishonesty. To learn about BSU's academic integrity expectations and students' rights, please read the University Student Academic Ethics Policy.

Academic integrity violations include giving or receiving an unfair academic advantage (cheating), presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own (plagiarism), and falsifying academic records. Unless otherwise indicated, you must work independently by yourself. Check with me if you are unsure whether something constitutes academic dishonesty. Examples of academic integrity violations include but are not limited to:

- Using resources not authorized by the faculty member (including devices, AI tools, hidden notes, and open books)
- Using commercial study websites to find answers to graded assignments (Chegg, Course Hero, StudyPool, OneClass, etc.).
- Without the instructor's written permission, giving away, buying, or selling graded assignments class notes, exams, study guides, or other course materials to other students or to third-party vendors (Course Hero, Chegg, 24HourAnswers, etc.).
- Working with another person on any assignment other than authorized group projects.
- Sharing or allowing others to access your files, whether done with permission or not.
- Reusing your own work from another semester, course, or section.
- Sharing answers with others during exams (passing notes, texting, whispering, gesturing)
- Discussing exam questions and answers with students who have not taken the exam.
- Soliciting others to complete work for you.

AI Statement

As you work on and submit assignments this semester, know that using generative AI tools to complete your assignments is a violation of Ball State's Academic Ethics Policy unless the AI

use is explicitly approved by the faculty member. During this class, we may use ChatGPT or other generative AI applications. You will be informed as to when, where, and how these tools are permitted to be used, along with guidance for attribution. In general, students may not submit any work generated by an AI program as their own. Doing so is plagiarism

University Statement

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's **Disability Services** office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or **dsd@bsu.edu**

Course Assignment Overview

Introduction Assignment	10 pts
Syllabus Quiz	10 pts
Quiz	35 pts
Assignments	75 pts
Midterm Exam	70 pts
Final Exam	150 pts
TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE:	350 pts

Grading Policies

Without any university excused absence, doctor's note, communication from a commanding officer, or any other appropriate documentation for an absence, the following applies:

Late Work: Late submissions result in a **10% late penalty per day**. Late work will not be accepted after 8 days.

Quizzes: Students may use their notes and textbook while taking quizzes.

Exams: The midterm exam and final exam cannot be turned in late or made up. Both exams are open note/open book.

Extensions: May be granted at the instructor's discretion as long students reach out beforehand to arrange an extension. Extensions are not granted because a student has assignments due in other classes. If an extension is granted, a late penalty will not be imposed.

Course Grading Scale:

Letter Grade	Range
A	100% - 94%
A-	<94% - 90%
B+	<90% - 87%
B	<87% - 84%
B-	<84% - 80%
C+	<80% - 77%
C	<77% - 74%
C-	<74% - 70%
D+	<70% - 67%
D	<67% - 64%
D-	<64% - 61%
F	<61% - 0%

University Grade Appeal Policy

If you believe you received a final course grade that does not reflect your performance due to fairness or a procedural issue, you have the right to file an appeal within 5 school days after final grades are posted by the Office of the Registrar. Review the University Grade Appeal Policy and Process

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

This instructor reserves the right to revoke, alter, or amend any portion of the syllabus in order to maintain flexibility and to present relevant instruction.

WEEK	DATES	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION	DUE DATE
1	**August 24- August 30**	Introduction to the Law of Evidence and the Pretrial Process	➢ Chapter 1 (pgs. 3 – 25) ➢ Introduction Assignment	**August 30, 2026 @ 11:59 PM**
2	**August 31 – September 6**	The Criminal Trial Process	➢ Chapter 2 (pgs. 26-55)	
Labor Day	**September 7**		➢ Syllabus Quiz	**September 7, 2026 @ 11:59 PM**
3	**September 8 – September 13**	Evidence-Basic Concepts: Relevance & Rule 403 Balancing	➢ Chapter 3 (pgs. 56-77)	
4	**September 14 – September 20**	Witnesses: - Competency, Privileged Communications, and Types	➢ Chapter 4 & 5 (pgs. 78-153) ➢ Assignment 1	**September 20, 2026 @ 11:59 PM**
5	**September 21 – September 27**	Character Evidence	➢ Chapter 6 (pgs. 154-177)	
6	**September 28 – October 4**	Character Evidence & Bad Acts	➢ Chapter 7 (pgs. 178-225) ➢ Quiz 1	**October 4, 2026 @ 11:59 PM**
7	**October 5 – October 11**	Character Evidence & Bad Acts & Habit Evidence	➢ Chapter 8 (pgs. 226-285)	
Fall Break	**October 12- October 13**			

8	**October 14 – October 18**	Credibility & Impeachment	➢ Chapter 9 (pgs. 286 -341)	
9	**October 19 – October 25**	Credibility & Impeachment	➢ Chapter 9 (pgs. 286 -341)	
10	**October 26 – November 1**	Credibility & Impeachment	➢ Chapter 10 (pgs. 342 – 365) ➢ **Midterm Opens**	
11	**November 2 – November 8**	Hearsay	➢ Chapters 11 & 12 (pgs. 366-421) ➢ **MIDTERM DUE**	**November 8, 2026 @ 11:59 PM**
12	**November 9 – November 15**	Hearsay	➢ Chapters 13 & 14 (pgs. 422 – 467)	
13	**November 16 – November 22**	Hearsay	➢ Chapter 15	
14	**November 23 – November 24**	Mock Trial Week		
THANKSGIVING BREAK	**November 25 – November 29**		➢ Final Mock Trial Assignment	**November 29. 2026 @ 11:59 PM**
15	**November 30 – December 7**	**Review**		
FINALS WEEK	**December 8 – December 11**		**FINAL EXAM**	**December 11, 2026 @ 4:59 PM**