

Syllabus

CRIJ 4345.060 – Courtroom Testimony
Spring 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Alejandro Castillo

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Preferred form of communication: Do not hesitate to contact me; we can arrange a phone call, in-person visit or zoom meeting.

Office hours: please reach out at anytime

Class: We can meet in person or zoom to discuss anything at your convenience; assignments will be submitted via Canvas-on-line.

Course Overview

This course will discuss the presentation of evidence in the criminal court system. Course topics include the evolution of the law of evidence and expert testimony admissibility in the United States, defining the different types of evidence and testimony presented during a trial, and comparing state and federal rules of evidence and expert testimony. Students will complete a mock testimony exercise at the end of the semester.

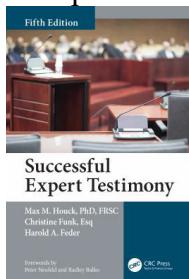
Student Learning Objectives

Through readings, discussions and other materials, we will pursue the following course objectives:

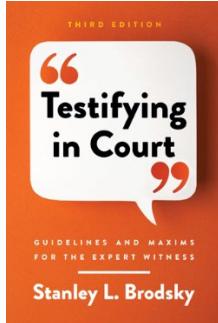
1. Think critically about important issues pertaining to courtroom testimony
2. Identify the immediate needs of professionalism and admissibility of expert testimony
3. Problem-solve solutions to issues found within the presentation of courtroom testimony
4. Identify the criminal justice resources needed to properly testify in a courtroom using forensically sound evidence

Required Textbooks

Houck, M. M., Funk, C., & Feder, H. (2018). *Successful expert testimony*. Taylor & Francis Group. ISBN: 9781315305707



Brodsky. (2023). *Testifying in court: Guidelines and maxims for the expert witness*.
ISBN: 9781433840111



Assignments and weights/percentage values

Discussions	20%
Assignments	20%
Quizzes	20%
Case Briefs	20%
Mock Testimony Exercise	<u>20%</u>
Total	100%

Grading Scale

A = 90% or greater

B = 80 – 89%

C = 70 – 79%

D = 60 – 69%

F = below 60%

Late Work and Make-Up Exams

The general rule is I will not accept any late assignments. Please pay particular attention to all due dates. Unfortunately, illnesses, deaths in the family, or other traumatic events are part of life. Such events are unwelcomed, please contact me as soon as possible and we will work together to extend an assignment.

Attendance Policy

You are expected to attend every class session, please do your best to communicate with the instructor. There will be important information being discussed that you will need to ensure your success in this course. It is important that you read all reading assignments to have a firm understanding of all material because it will assist you in preparing for all assignments.

UT Tyler does have a [Class Attendance policy](#) in the catalog.

University Policies and Information

Withdrawing from Class

Students may withdraw (drop) from this course using the Withdrawal Portal. Withdrawing (dropping) this course can impact your Financial Aid, Scholarships, Veteran Benefits, Exemptions, Waivers, International Student Status, housing, and degree progress. Please speak with your instructors, consider your options, speak with your advisor, and visit the One-Stop Service Center (STE 230) or email enroll@uttyler.edu to get a complete review of your student account and the possible impacts to withdrawing. We want you to make an informed decision. UT Tyler faculty and staff are here for you and often can provide additional support options or assistance. Make sure to carefully read the implications for withdrawing from a course and the instructions on using the Withdrawal portal.

Texas law prohibits students from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. The six courses dropped includes those from other 2-year or 4-year Texas public colleges and universities. Consider the impact withdrawing from this class has on your academic progress and other areas, such as financial implications. We encourage you to consult your advisor(s) and Enrollment Services for additional guidance. CAUTION #1: Withdrawing before census day does not mean you get a full refund. Please see the Tuition and Fee Refund Schedule. CAUTION #2: All international students must check with the Office of International Programs before withdrawing. All international students are required to enroll full-time for fall and spring terms. CAUTION #3: All UT Tyler Athletes must check with the Athletic Academic Coordinator before withdrawing from a course. CAUTION #4: All veterans or military-affiliated students should consult with the Military and Veterans Success Center.

Artificial Intelligence Statement

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy. Refer to the About This Course section of the UT Tyler Syllabus Module for specific information on appropriate use of AI in your course(s).

Course Requirement Information

Quizzes

At the end of each weekly chapter, you will be required to complete a comprehension reading chapter quiz. These quizzes will be multiple choice and true/false. The purpose of each quiz is to encourage you to read the chapter. These quizzes will be due by the posted due date/time.

Class Assessment

You must be in attendance to receive credit for the assessments. Reading and being prepared is important for your success in this course and develops a positive discipline. Your overall course grade will also consist of in-class assessments intended to assess your learning and to enhance the learning environment. Please do your best to participate and complete all assignments. Make sure you read the material and think about it before class. Each of you will be expected to be an active participant in all assignments. Education research has suggested that the more engaged and active a student is in the learning process; the more learning will occur.

Discussions

You will be required to complete online activities that correspond with the materials presented in the chapter/s for the week and will be provided with instructions for each activity. These entries are designed to allow you the opportunity to analyze the material through the use of critical thinking.

Post/Reply requirements: First, post an original answer to the discussion question in the format indicated. Second, you must respond/comment to a classmate/s post, this response must also be detailed and complete. To receive full credit, you must complete both sections of the requirement, unless instructed otherwise. The discussion will be due by the posted due date/time.

Assignments

You will be tasked with other forms of active participation to include a reaction paper, judicial case briefs and effective communication activities. They are designed to assist you in understanding the presented material and prepare you for the mock testimony exercise. Detailed information will be provided in the Canvas modules and will be due by the posted date/time.

Mock Testimony Exercise

The criminal court system takes many people to function efficiently and effectively. No case can be investigated or prosecuted by one individual; it requires collaboration, time, knowledge, and effort. This assignment will challenge you while allowing you the opportunity to be creative and apply critical thinking skills in a team environment. Detailed information will be provided in Canvas-you will enjoy it and do great.

Class Schedule
(subject to change)

Week 1

Self-Introduction

Syllabus comprehension quiz

Week 2

Chp. 1 - Expert Witness: An Overview

Quiz

Week 3

Chp.3 – The Players

Quiz

Case Brief: *Mapp v. Ohio* (1961)

Week 4

Discussion: *Frye v. United States* 293 F. 1013 (1923)

Week 5

Case Brief: *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals* (1993)

Week 6

Chp. 4 - The Legal Context

Quiz

Week 7

Chp. 5 - Testimony

Quiz

Case Brief: *People v. Jennings* (1911)

Week 8

Effective Communication-FEMA

Week 9

Spring Break

Week 10

Reaction Paper

Week 11

Case Brief: *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963)

Testifying in Court-Part 1 and Part 2

Week 12

Discussion: Chp. 9 - Ethics, blue book, post and reply

Testifying in Court-Part 4 and Part 5

Week 13

Chp. 6 - Direct Examination of Experts and Chp. 8 - Cross Examination

Quiz

Testifying in Court- Part 6 and Part 7

Week 14

Prepare for Mock Testimony Exercise

Effective Communication

Week 15

Mock Testimony Exercise

Week 16

Mock Testimony Exercise