

Competitive Moot Court

Fall 2024 Syllabus

WRIT 320 ▪ Antonio Elefano

Introduction

WRIT 320: Competitive Moot Court is an advanced writing course designed to help you develop your critical reasoning and legal advocacy skills. You will learn to draft professional legal documents and you'll compete for the University of Southern California in oral argument this fall. Competition against other top teams across the country will allow you to test your mettle against the best pre-law minds in the country and to expand your network as you proceed toward law school.

This course is taught as a first-year law school writing course would be, with an emphasis on practical legal writing. Pursuant to our goals this semester, you will read and analyze case law and statutes. Writing assignments will be tailored toward a specific audience and purpose. Learning how to recognize and how to adapt to shifting levels of discourse will be key to succeeding in the course.

While there will be no outside research required, legal writing is notoriously difficult to understand. Whenever you write, the temptation will be to simply copy and paste large sections of text, even when you don't fully appreciate the intricacies of what you're quoting. Resist this urge. Law, in the end, is simply language, and as complicated as that language can be at times, it is worth your patience and your thoughtful deliberation. Just as with any genre, if you cannot read closely and accurately, you cannot write effectively.

Attendance and Participation

You are allowed two excused absences throughout the semester. Absences are only **excused if you e-mail me ahead of time to let me know you will not be in class.** You don't have to provide an excuse or supporting documentation (no doctor's notes required); all I demand is notice. (Note: missing a conference is the same as missing class and also requires advance notice.)

Every unexcused absence—meaning every absence in which you fail to provide notice and/or any absence beyond the excused two—will result in a grade penalty on the Daily Work portion of your final grade. Students with more than ten absences in a given semester will be advised to withdraw to avoid a failing mark.

If you miss a class, you are responsible for finding out what work you missed from one of your classmates (though this syllabus will also be instructive). Also, you are responsible for any assignments due on a day you don't attend; accordingly, you must submit them via Blackboard/Turnitin and send them to me via e-mail.

Course Details:

Section 64997

F 2-3:50 p.m. in GFS 201
or alternatively (in case of
emergency):

<https://usc.zoom.us/j/96156315764>

Meeting ID: 961 5631 5764

Professor:

Antonio Elefano

elefano@usc.edu

Office: JEF 235

Phone: 213-740-4945

Co-Instructors

Daniel Liu

Dliu@gibsondunn.com

GFS 204

Harmon Gill

harmon.gill.2026@lawmail.usc.edu

GFS 205

Office Hours:

MW 12-12:45 pm and by
appointment in JEF 235 or
<https://usc.zoom.us/j/5334608479>

Meeting ID: 533 460 8479

Required Texts & Supplies:

- Elefano's *Legal Writing for the Undergraduate*
- Assigned readings and assignments on Blackboard (Bb)

Evaluation

Your final semester mark will be determined as follows:

Important Dates:
Mon., Sept. 2: Labor Day
Fri., Oct. 11: Fall Break
Wed., Nov. 27-Fri., Nov. 29:
 Thanksgiving Break
Fri., Dec. 6: Last day of class

- 25%** **Daily Work** – includes ancillary writing, class participation, quizzes and homework
- 10%** **Assignment 1** – 8-10 page double-spaced Cold Bench Oral Argument Script (one side of case)
- 35%** **Assignment 2** – 16-20 pages double-spaced Oral Argument Scripts and Outlines (both sides of case)
- 30%** **Oral Argument** – at AMCA Regional Tournament or last day of class

Late Papers and Extensions

Writing assignments are due on Blackboard **at 11:59 p.m. on the designated dates**, typically on nights preceding a class day. Only under dire circumstances (**the LSAT doesn't qualify**) will late work be accepted. Failure to submit by the 11:59 p.m. deadline will result in a one-step (e.g., B+ to B) grade penalty. Late papers will be penalized one full letter grade (e.g., A to B) for each **calendar day** they are late. Once you've reached three calendar days past the due date, the paper will not be accepted at all.

Conferences

Occasionally throughout the semester we will meet in conferences in lieu of our regular class period. During conference weeks my regular office hours will be canceled.

Classroom Etiquette

Mobile devices should be shut off during class and during individual and group conferences. Laptops may be used for note taking, but if they prove distracting, I reserve the right to ban them as well. In the event we have to switch to online instruction, I would prefer that you activate your camera for every Zoom session and that you keep your focus on class during class time.

Syllabus

Class	Topic	Assignment for next class
1 Fri. Aug. 28	Intro to Competitive Moot Court <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss AMCA prompt • Introduction to Course • Discuss Principles of Oral Argument • Discuss Oral Argument Style (Volume, Pace, Body Language, Tone) • Skill Drill 1: Thematic Introductions • Discuss Assignment 1: Cold Bench Oral Argument Script (everyone should be assigned one side: DeNolf or Olympus) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin work on A1. • Begin outlining oral argument for A1 side (DeNolf or Olympus). • Prepare for Skill Drill 2: Roadmaps (draft a complete introduction for whatever side you're arguing for A1).

Class	Topic	Assignment for next class
2 Fri. Sept. 6	Roadmaps and Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill Drill 2: Thematic Introductions and Roadmaps • Discuss arguing in the alternative and acceptable concessions • Discuss A1 issues • Oral Argument Infinity Rounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete A1; submit on Bb by 11:59 p.m. on Tues., Sept. 10. By Wednesday, Sept. 11 at 11 a.m., put one hard copy in Professor Elefano's box in the Writing Program main office (Jefferson Building). • Prepare for Skill Drill 3: Mastering the Facts. Identify three key facts for one side of your Issue. Memorize the citations for the facts (where in the record they can be found) and be prepared to explain their significance using legal citations from the case universe.
3 Fri. Sept. 13	Mastering the Facts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill Drill 3: Mastering the Facts • Discuss A1 feedback • Discuss A2: Oral Argument Scripts (script the openings and closings and outline the rest) • Oral Argument Infinity Rounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin work on A2 (due Mon., Oct. 21). • Prepare for Skill Drill 4: Anticipating Questions. For one side (DeNolf or Olympus) come up with (1) a question you'd invite from the judicial panel and (2) a question you're afraid of. Come up with prospective answers for both and be ready to present and discuss.
4 Fri. Sept. 20	Anticipating Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill Drill 4: Anticipating Questions • Discuss importance of listening, clarifying questions and answering directly • Oral Argument Infinity Rounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue work on A2. • Prepare for Skill Drill 5: Anticipating Your Opponent. For either side of your issue, anticipate a likely argument from your opponent and construct a counterargument. • Prepare for timed oral arguments.
5 Fri. Sept. 27	Anticipating your Opponent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill Drill 5: Anticipating Your Opponent • Mock Timed Oral Arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue work on A2. • Prepare for Skill Drill 6: Rebuttals. Working with someone from the opposite issue, anticipate two main points of rebuttal (one for each issue). • Prepare for timed oral arguments.
6 Fri. Oct. 4	Rebuttals and Conclusions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill Drill 6: Rebuttals • Mock Timed Oral Arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue work on A2. • Prepare for Skill Drill 7: Conclusions. Prepare and memorize a scripted conclusion for both DeNolf and Olympus. • Prepare for timed oral arguments

Class	Topic	Assignment for next class
Friday, October 11: Fall Break (No Class)		
7 Fri. Oct. 18	Conclusions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill Drill 7: Conclusions Mock Timed Oral Arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete A2 and <u>submit on Bb by 11:59 p.m. on Mon., Oct. 21.</u> Prepare for timed oral arguments.
8 Fri. Oct. 25	Mock Timed Oral Arguments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss A2 feedback Mock Timed Oral Arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare for timed oral arguments.
9 Fri. Nov. 1	Mock Timed Oral Arguments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mock Timed Oral Arguments tentatively to be held at Ninth Circuit Courthouse in Pasadena (be in court attire) Discuss plans for USC Regional Tournament (if you're not competing at USC, be prepared to help run the tournament the weekend of Nov. 2-3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare for Regional Tournament.
10 Fri. Nov. 8	Mock Timed Oral Arguments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mock Timed Oral Arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare for Post-Regional tournament.
Monday, November 11: Veteran's Day		
11 Fri. Nov. 15	Mock Timed Oral Arguments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mock Timed Oral Arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare for Post-Regional tournament.
12 Fri. Nov. 22	Mock Timed Oral Arguments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mock Timed Oral Arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare for Post-Regional tournament.
Wednesday-Friday, November 27-29: Thanksgiving Holiday (No Class)		
13 Fri. Dec. 6	Final Oral Arguments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Oral Arguments (for anyone who did not compete at Regionals) Final Thoughts Course Evaluations 	

Students with Disabilities

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

The Writing Center

The Writing Center (a component of USC's Writing Program) is located on the second floor in Taper Hall on campus. The center is open to all students of the university and offers free consultations for any type of writing assignment. You are encouraged to visit the center throughout the semester for any additional guidance on the assignments for this course. Call or email the center for an appointment with a writing consultant, and be sure to bring the relevant assignment sheet, paper, or prepared questions to your session (740-3691; writing@usc.edu).

Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086

eetix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776

osas.usc.edu

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

ombuds.usc.edu

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-3340 or otfp@med.usc.edu

chan.usc.edu/otfp

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.