**Lesson Plan: Civil Trial Advocacy**

**Instructor: James S. Rummonds**

**University: University of National and World Economy, Sofia**

**Course Duration: Five-Day Intensive Course (6 hours per day, 30 hours total)**

**Target Audience: Upper-level law students**

**Course Overview:**

This course provides an **immersive, hands-on introduction to U.S. civil trial advocacy**, covering **trial preparation, jury selection, courtroom strategy, witness examination, objections, closing arguments, and post-trial motions**. Each day builds toward the **culmination of a full mock trial**, where students will take on roles as attorneys, witnesses, and jurors.

**Learning Objectives:**

By the end of the course, students will:

1. **Understand** the civil trial process and trial preparation.
2. **Develop** persuasive **opening and closing statements**.
3. **Practice voir dire**, assessing jurors for bias and suitability.
4. **Examine and cross-examine witnesses** using advocacy techniques.
5. **Master courtroom objections** and responses.
6. **Gain experience arguing motions** before a judge.
7. **Engage in a full-scale mock trial**, applying their skills in real time.

**Course Schedule (Five Days, Six Hours Per Day)**

**Day 1: Trial Preparation & Pretrial Motions**

🕘 **Session 1 (9:00 AM - 12:00 PM): Trial Preparation & Strategy**

* **Overview of a Civil Trial** (Phases of trial, roles of judge, jury, attorneys)
* **Trial Binders & Briefs:**
  + How to organize exhibits, witness lists, motions
  + Writing a **trial brief** for the judge
* **Pretrial Strategy:**
  + **Discovery completion**
  + **Identifying key witnesses & evidence**
* **📌 Practical Exercise:**
  + **Students draft key sections of a trial brief**

**🔺Break (12:00 - 1:00 PM)**

🕐 **Session 2 (1:00 PM - 4:00 PM): Pretrial Motions & Objections**

* **Motions in Limine** (excluding prejudicial evidence)
* **Dispositive Motions** (motion to strike, motion for judgment on the pleadings)
* **Objections & Responses** (Relevance, hearsay, leading questions, etc.)
* **📌 Practical Exercise:**
  + **Mock pretrial motion hearing** (students argue for/against evidence exclusion)

**Day 2: Jury Selection & Opening Statements**

🕘 **Session 1 (9:00 AM - 12:00 PM): Jury Selection & Voir Dire**

* **Jury psychology:**
  + How jurors think & make decisions
* **Crafting Voir Dire Questions**
* **Challenges for Cause vs. Peremptory Challenges**
* **Jury Selection Charting**
* **📌 Practical Exercise:**
  + **Mock voir dire session** (students conduct jury selection)

**🔺Break (12:00 - 1:00 PM)**

🕐 **Session 2 (1:00 PM - 4:00 PM): Opening Statements**

* **Why Opening Statements Matter:**
  + **Juror studies show many decide cases after opening**
* **Structuring the Opening Statement:**
  + Telling a compelling story
  + Establishing credibility
  + Avoiding argument (facts vs. persuasion)
* **📌 Practical Exercise:**
  + **Students deliver 5-minute opening statements**

**Day 3: Witness Examination (Direct & Cross) & Evidence Handling**

🕘 **Session 1 (9:00 AM - 12:00 PM): Direct Examination & Witness Prep**

* **Building a clear narrative through direct examination**
* **Rules for questioning:**
  + No leading questions
  + Using witness testimony to introduce exhibits
* **Preparing Witnesses:**
  + Anticipating **cross-examination attacks**
* **📌 Practical Exercise:**
  + **Students conduct direct examinations with witness actors**

**🔺Break (12:00 - 1:00 PM)**

🕐 **Session 2 (1:00 PM - 4:00 PM): Cross-Examination & Evidence Admission**

* **Cross-Examination Techniques:**
  + Control the witness
  + **Leading questions**
  + Using impeachment strategies
* **Admitting Evidence into Court:**
  + Laying proper foundation
  + Authentication rules
* **📌 Practical Exercise:**
  + **Mock cross-examinations & objections practice**

**Day 4: Closing Arguments & Trial Presentation**

🕘 **Session 1 (9:00 AM - 12:00 PM): Closing Arguments**

* **How Closing Differs from Opening**
  + Now you can **argue the case**
  + Connecting the facts to the law
  + **Persuasive techniques & emotional appeals**
* **Common Pitfalls in Closing Arguments**
* **📌 Practical Exercise:**
  + **Students deliver closing arguments with feedback**

**🔺Break (12:00 - 1:00 PM)**

🕐 **Session 2 (1:00 PM - 4:00 PM): Prepping for Mock Trial**

* **Case Assignments:**
  + Students assigned roles (plaintiff, defense, witnesses, jurors)
* **Final Trial Prep:**
  + Reviewing exhibits, arguments, trial strategy
* **📌 Practical Exercise:**
  + **Teams finalize trial strategies & motions**

**Day 5: Full Mock Trial & Debriefing**

🕘 **Session 1 (9:00 AM - 12:00 PM): Mock Trial (First Half)**

* **Jury selection & voir dire**
* **Opening statements**
* **Plaintiff’s case-in-chief**
* **Direct & cross-examinations**

**🔺Break (12:00 - 1:00 PM)**

🕐 **Session 2 (1:00 PM - 4:00 PM): Mock Trial (Second Half) & Debriefing**

* **Defense case-in-chief**
* **Rebuttal, closing arguments**
* **Jury deliberation (if applicable)**
* **Debrief & feedback session**

**Final Assessment**

**Evaluation Breakdown:**  
✅ **Class Participation (20%)** – Engagement in discussions, pretrial motions, voir dire  
✅ **Opening & Closing Statements (30%)** – Delivery, organization, effectiveness  
✅ **Trial Brief (20%)** – Organization, clarity, and use of legal arguments  
✅ **Mock Trial Performance (30%)** – Effectiveness in examination, objections, and advocacy

**Course Conclusion & Reflection**

* **Key Takeaways:**
  + The importance of **trial preparation**
  + The balance between **persuasion & credibility**
  + The **practical application of law in courtroom advocacy**
* **Comparative Discussion:** Differences between U.S. and Bulgarian civil trial procedures