

To My Prospective Students:

I am quite honored to have been asked to visit the Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Law to expose you to American criminal law and American trial techniques. I know that taking a course from a foreign professor about foreign laws and procedures can be intimidating, so I thought I'd provide you with some insights about me and the courses I will be teaching.

Please allow me to first introduce myself. My name is Steve Oberman. I have been a trial lawyer in Knoxville, Tennessee (in the southeastern portion of the United States) since 1980. Although most of my work has been in the criminal defense field with a concentration on representing defendants charged with the crime of Driving Under the Influence of an Intoxicant, I have represented people charged with everything from speeding to murder. I have also represented business corporations and people injured in accidents, medical malpractice cases and cases in other areas of civil law.

I have taught at the University of Tennessee Law School since 1993. At this stage of my career, I have decided to allow the other lawyers in my firm to take charge for a few months while I embark on this adventure in Hungary. Of course, my wife of 45 years will be accompanying me during my stay in Budapest.

I could have just taken a long vacation, but I love to teach. I am truly looking forward to meeting you and learning as much from you as you will hopefully learn from me. In 2019, I taught these same courses at the University of Latvia Faculty of Law. My students and I found that experience to be mutually enjoyable and educational.

My philosophy of teaching is low pressure—I believe that one learns much better in a fun, interesting environment. So, hopefully you will find the classes to be enjoyable as well as informative.

Allow me to next provide some information about the two classes I will be teaching:

In my American Criminal Law class, I anticipate an environment where my students and I can discuss how criminal laws are created, how courts interpret these laws, and how they are implemented in real life situations—all while considering the rights of American citizens. We will also compare American laws to those of other countries.

There will be reading assignments of some cases that are important to American criminal law. We will discuss those cases in class and determine if you believe them to be decided correctly. You should feel free to disagree with the decisions. In fact, many decisions are not even unanimous among the deciding judges, as it takes only a majority of our appellate judges to issue a ruling. Of more importance is learning

the fundamentals upon which the decision is based and then being able to logically extend the reasoning and policy considerations of the case to other facts (cases).

The American Trial Advocacy class is geared to those students who want a better understanding of the rules and procedures used in trying a case in the United States. By the end of the semester, you will be able to actually try the case that we will have studied all semester!

This course will have two components. The first is a lecture-style class where I will introduce you to the various phases of a trial—opening statements, direct examination of a witness, cross-examination, etc.

The second component allows the students to perform each of these phases almost a week later—giving you time to prepare. During the class, students will take turns role-playing as witnesses and trial lawyers. Each student will perform each week. My students at The University of Tennessee report that they spend 2-4 hours per week preparing for this class.

Don't worry, though. I don't expect students to excel in these skills at the beginning of the semester. I want to assist you in your public speaking skills, teach you the basic rules of advocacy, and introduce you to some of the universal rules of evidence and procedure in American courts. I believe these skills will translate to assist you regardless of where you practice law. Even if you don't plan to become a trial lawyer, you will benefit from a better understanding of how disputes are resolved in the courtroom. At the very least, the course will build your confidence in analyzing, presenting, and arguing legal issues.

Of course, a more detailed description of each of my courses is available from the ELTE Faculty of Law. The study materials for these courses will be provided at no cost to you. I would be honored to have you enroll in one or both of my classes. However, even if your schedule does not permit you to enroll in one of these classes, please take the time to stop by my office or classroom to introduce yourself.

I look forward to meeting you soon (Várom, hogy hamarosan találkozzunk),


Steve Oberman