



Implementing Best Practices & Educating Lawyers: Teaching Skills and Professionalism Across the Curriculum

Workshop
3A

**Techniques to Improve the Analytical Skills of
Students in Large Required Classes**

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Professor Ruth Jones teaches criminal law, criminal procedure, and gender and the law at McGeorge Law School, University of the Pacific. She has visited at DePaul College of Law and Suffolk University School of Law, and a variety of criminal justice seminars presenting on topics such as: criminal law responses to terrorism, prison law, and gender and criminal justice. She also developed and taught a criminal law legal methods course, integrating analytical and study skills with substantive law for at risk first-year students.

At McGeorge, she has served as the chair of the McGeorge Committee on Teaching Methods.

Example of A Class Exercise Emphasizing Legal Analysis Skills

Name that Homicide: The Game of Legal Analysis

Rules of the Game

1. Each student will be randomly assigned to the red team or the blue team.
2. During the game, I will draw the name of a team member and describe a set of facts. Based on the stated facts, the team member will discuss the most applicable homicide charge by stating the correct definition of the rule, e.g., the definition of murder and the elements of the theory of malice that will be applied and then analyzing the facts under the common law. The analysis must include statements of facts, inferences from those facts and the legal conclusions that flow from those inferences. There will be almost no points given for mere legal conclusions. The rule must be stated from memory and no books or notes will be used during the game.
3. The answers shall include a precise and accurate statement of the controlling legal principle(s) and an analysis of the facts. I will determine whether the answer will receive 0, 5, or 10 points. 0 points shall be awarded for no answer or an answer that fails to state the rule incorrectly or fails to provide sufficient analysis, 5 points for an answer that correctly states the controlling legal rule but fails to adequately analyze the facts, and 10 points for a correct statement of the rule and an adequate analysis. The questions will require the teams to apply either common law or the MPC.
[During the game, I will often explain why answers received lessor points.]
4. Each team shall have two lifelines during the game. Use of the lifeline allows a team member who is called on but does not know the answer to call on another team member to answer the question. An individual team member can only be a lifeline once during the game.
5. If one team fails to answer the question correctly, an individual on the other team can “steal” the question by correctly analyzing the facts.

Good Luck!