Wrongful Convictions is a three credit course offering students an insider’s look into the operation of the criminal justice system. The course is a prerequisite for enrolling in the MU Innocence Clinic. It should be of particular interest to any student interested in working in a prosecutor’s office, public defender’s office or for a firm doing criminal defense work. The course is designed to help students gain insight into features of the criminal justice system that tend to produce wrongful convictions. In addition to examining the causes of wrongful convictions, we will consider systemic reforms that might minimize convicting the innocent. Finally, the class will also focus on recurring ethical issues that confront prosecutors and criminal defense lawyers.

Learning objectives
Students will:

• develop an appreciation for major features of criminal justice system that contribute to wrongful convictions;
• be able to identify potential issues with eyewitness identifications, confessions, and forensic science that might adversely affect the outcome of a criminal case;
• explore potential reforms that might improve the criminal justice system;
• gain a better understanding of the barriers that obstruct/ prevent meaningful systemic reform;
• analyze a trial transcript of case to determine possible factual issues to investigate to pursue a showing of actual innocence;
• learn more about the ethical obligations of prosecutors and criminal defense counsel

Basic Information

MU Professor Rodney Uphoff has an office on the second floor in Room 213. His e-mail is uphoffr@missouri.edu and his phone number is 882-3035.

Materials

The text for the course is a set of Readings that can be purchased at Ellis Library Quick Copy or at the UMKC Law Library. In addition, all students should have read John Grisham’s book, The Innocent Man, prior to the first class.

Assignments

Reading assignments – For each class there will be a reading assignment as reflected in the Syllabus and the Table of Contents in the Reading materials. Students will be expected to have read the articles/cases and watched the film or documentary assigned for that day and come prepared to discuss the readings/film in class.

Case Analysis – Each student will review the Tommie Henson case file later in the semester. This is an actual case that was evaluated by the Midwest Innocence Project. Following your review of the file, you will prepare a 5-15 page single spaced memo that (a) assesses the strength and weaknesses of the State’s case against
Henson (b) addresses Henson’s claim that he was not guilty of the charges for which he was convicted, and (c) recommends either that the case be closed and why or spells out the investigation that needs to be conducted including persons to be interviewed and evidence that needs to be gathered if we are to try to demonstrate Henson’s actual innocence.

This report will be due at noon on November 18. Students can email it to Prof. Uphoff or drop it off in Room 203.

Final Exam - There will be a two hour closed book final examination that will be based on the assigned reading materials, films, and class discussions over the semester.

Grading - This class is graded on the standard numerical basis. Active class participation will be rewarded. The maximum possible points available during the semester are:

- Henson Case Analysis 45%
- Class Participation, reflective papers 15%
- Final Examination 40%

Attendance - Due to the nature of this class, attendance is essential and expected. Because class participation is a significant factor in your grade, a student who misses more than 3 classes can expect that it will adversely affect one’s final grade, unless one of us agrees that the miss was a result of compelling circumstances. Students with more than 7 unexcused absences will not be allowed to take the final exam, and will be dropped from the class.
Accommodation - The School of Law has a policy of providing reasonable accommodation for students who have physical disabilities or are in need of specialized services because of a learning disability. If you need reasonable accommodation for this class, please see Professor Uphoff as soon as possible to discuss any individualized special arrangements.

If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, you may contact me privately after class or in my office, however all requests for accommodations are handled by the Associate Dean for Academic affairs. To request academic accommodations (for example, a note taker), students must also register with the Office of Disability Services, (http://disabilityservices.missouri.edu), S5 Memorial Union, 882-4696. It is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting academic accommodations, and for accommodations planning in cooperation with students and instructors, as needed and consistent with course requirements. For other MU resources for students with disabilities, click on "Disability Resources" on the MU homepage.

Diversity and Inclusion - The School of Law community welcomes intellectual diversity and respects student rights. Students who have questions concerning the quality of instruction in this class may address concerns to either the Dean or Associate Dean of either school. All students will have the opportunity to submit an anonymous evaluation of the instructors at the end of this course.

Academic Integrity - Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of the School of Law. All members of the law school community
must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether the effort is successful. The law school community regards breaches of the School of Law's Honor Code as extremely serious matters.

In the event that you violate our Academic Integrity rules on any portion of the work required for this class, you may expect a failing grade in this course as well as possible disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, please see me.