



Introduction to Law: The Constitution Unlocked—Thinking Like a Lawyer

This 12-session elective, taught by federal judges and practicing lawyers, will expose students to a range of exciting and relevant legal topics, and will help students to develop their public speaking and advocacy skills through preparation for a moot court competition. The elective will be held on Wednesdays from 5:00 p.m.—6:15 p.m. at the Thurgood Marshall U.S. Courthouse (40 Foley Square) in downtown Manhattan, beginning on January 21, 2026 (no class on February 18, 2026, April 1, 2026, or April 8, 2026). One session will include a field trip to a law firm. Family members are invited to attend the final session on Wednesday, April 29, 2026 at the federal courthouse to watch the students participate in a moot court competition.

A sampling of topics that will be covered throughout the elective include: the First Amendment and student speech, the Fifth Amendment and student privacy, the Constitution and national security, and improving fairness in the criminal justice system. A full agenda for the program is attached.

Students will have the opportunity to meet and speak with federal judges and practicing lawyers during the sessions and learn about careers in the law.

Students who are interested in participating should fill out the registration form, linked [here](#). There is limited capacity in this free program and spaces will be offered on a first-come first-served basis.



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CLASS ONE: January 21, 2026	INSIDE THE FEDERAL COURTS/WINNING AN ARGUMENT: Behind the Scenes Look at the Federal Court System (Discussion)
CLASS TWO: January 28, 2026	THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE: Defending the Accused in a Federal Criminal Case (Discussion)
CLASS THREE: February 4, 2026	THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE: Investigating and Prosecuting a Federal Criminal Case (Discussion)
CLASS FOUR: February 11, 2026	THE THREAT OF TERRORISM: Balancing Civil Liberties and National Security (Discussion)
CLASS FIVE: February 25, 2026	THE HIGHEST COURT IN THE LAND: Making Appellate Legal Arguments (Instruction)
CLASS SIX: March 4, 2026	THE CONSTITUTION INSIDE THE SCHOOLHOUSE DOORS: First Amendment and Free Speech (Discussion)
CLASS SEVEN: March 11, 2026	FROM THE NFL GRIDIRON TO THE COURTROOM: Achieving Your Dreams (Discussion)
CLASS EIGHT: March 18, 2026	FEDERAL INVESTIGATIONS: INSIDE THE FBI (Discussion)
CLASS NINE: March 25, 2026	FIELD TRIP: Exploring the World of Big Law (Visit to NYC Law Firm)
CLASS TEN: April 15, 2026	STARTING LIFE AGAIN: Exoneration After Wrongful Conviction for Rape and Murder (Discussion)
CLASS ELEVEN: April 22, 2026	MOOT COURT PREP
CLASS TWELVE: April 29, 2026	COMPETITION & RECEPTION

Speakers & Instructors Include:

United States Circuit Judge Joseph F. Bianco

United States District Judge John P. Cronan
(prosecutor in the investigation and prosecution of Faisal Shahzad in connection with the 2010 attempted car bombing in Times Square)

United States Magistrate Judge Marcia M. Henry

Federal Defender Deirdre von Dornum
(defense counsel in the appeal by Dzhokar Tsarnaev for his convictions and death sentence in connection with the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing)

Former Federal Prosecutor Maria Cruz Melendez
(prosecutor in the investigation and prosecution of R. Kelly)

Former NFL Football Player and Big Law Attorney Michael Catapano

Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District (1969) Plaintiff Mary Beth Tinker

Jeffrey Deskovic
(founder of the Deskovic Foundation)

Federal Prosecutors

Christopher Raia
(Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York Field Office of the FBI)