AN UNDERSTANDING OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE is fundamental to any lawyer’s education. At the University of Virginia, the nation’s leading criminal law faculty offer an in-depth array of courses on both the substantive criteria of guilt or innocence and the procedures used in the arrest, prosecution and punishment of offenders. On topics ranging from the unreliability of eyewitness identifications to the consequences of plea bargaining, Virginia’s faculty are looking at the criminal justice system with fresh eyes and helping students focus on how to make a more just society.

VIRGINIA STUDENTS do not study criminal law only from a distance. They also enroll in clinics that offer hands-on involvement in death penalty cases, criminal prosecution or defense, and innocence cases. In these courses, students explore real-world problems and develop a nuanced understanding of the issues facing the criminal justice system today.

Finally, the Law School supplements formal classes and participatory clinics with a wide range of extracurricular activities dedicated to criminal law. Virginia has a journal devoted to criminal law — one of only a handful of student-run publications on that topic — as well as an active innocence group and advocacy organizations focused on rape and domestic violence.

Collectively, these experiences lead Virginia graduates to coveted positions in the U.S. Department of Justice Honors Program, in U.S. attorneys’ offices, and in district attorney and defense offices across the country.

COURSES AND SEMINARS

Advanced Criminal Law: Adult Sexual Abuse Cases (JAG)
Advanced Criminal Law: Child Abuse Cases (JAG)
Contemporary Debates in Criminal Law
Crime and Punishment in America

COURSES AND SEMINARS

American History
Criminal Adjudication
Criminal Investigation
Criminal Law in the Supreme Court
Criminal Procedure
Criminal Procedure Survey
Criminology
Cybercrime
Federal Criminal Law

COURSES AND SEMINARS

Federal Pretrial Litigation
Federal Sentencing
Habeas Corpus
Immigration Enforcement
Innocence Cases: How Much Is Enough?
International Criminal Law
International Criminal Justice: Its Successes, Failures and
UVA LAW PROFESSOR BRANDON GARRETT, one of the nation’s top criminal law experts, is author of the books “Convicting the Innocent: Where Criminal Prosecutions Go Wrong,” examining the cases of the first 250 people to be exonerated by DNA testing, and “Too Big to Jail: How Prosecutors Compromise with Corporations.” He also recently co-authored the first comprehensive casebook on habeas corpus. Students frequently work with Garrett to research his projects, which include online databases tracking evidence and transcripts in wrongful conviction cases, and non-prosecution agreements between corporations and the Justice Department.

Future Prospects
International Financial Crimes
Issues in Criminal Law Theory
Law of the Police
Mental Health Issues In Juvenile Justice
Plea Bargaining
Profiling
Psychiatry and Criminal Law

Rule of Law/Security
Cooperation (JAG)
Scientific Evidence
Social Science in Law
Special Topics in Physical and Sexual Abuse Cases (JAG)
Survey of Military Justice (JAG)
Topics in Federal Criminal Law: Fraud, Corruption, Group

Criminality
War Crimes (JAG)
White Collar Criminal Defense Practice

CLINICS

CHILD ADVOCACY CLINIC
In the clinic, offered in conjunction with the JustChildren Program of the Legal Aid Justice Center, students represent low-income children statewide who have problems with the education, foster care and juvenile justice systems.

CRIMINAL DEFENSE CLINIC
The semester-long Criminal Defense Clinic allows students to represent defendants in criminal cases in the local courts under the direct supervision of an experienced local criminal defense attorney.

Students perform all of the lawyering functions associated with their cases, including interviews, investigation, research, negotiation and courtroom advocacy.

PROSECUTION CLINIC
In this yearlong clinic, students work with prosecutors to try cases in local jurisdictions. Students explore a range of issues involved in the discharge of a prosecutor’s duties, including the exercise of discretion in the decision to initiate, prosecute, reduce or drop charges; interaction among prosecutors and defense counsel, investigative agencies and law enforcement personnel; and dealing with victims and other witnesses.

INNOCENCE PROJECT CLINIC
Students in this yearlong clinic investigate three potential wrongful convictions of incarcerated individuals in Virginia. One of the three cases has forensic evidence (usually DNA) that could potentially be tested, and two are non-DNA cases.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
Several organizations focus on criminal law issues.

The VIRGINIA JOURNAL OF CRIMINAL LAW’s annual symposium offers insight not only for UVA Law students, but for local lawyers who earn continuing education credit for attending the event. The 2014 symposium, focused on criminal discovery, featured an attorney who helped exonerate former Texas inmate Michael Morton.

“Failing to disclose exculpatory evidence continues to be a serious problem nationwide, with reversals of convictions due to violations of Brady v. Maryland, and cases in which exculpatory evidence came to light only years after a conviction,” said conference organizer SEAN MULLIGAN ’15.

The Virginia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers also holds its annual conference at UVA Law, and students are welcome to attend.