*A moot court is a role-play of a Supreme Court hearing. The Supreme Court of the United States is the highest court in the nation and the court of last resort. A decision by the Supreme Court is the law of the land. The Court, comprised of a panel of justices, is asked to rule on a lower court’s decision. There is no trial; no witnesses are called, and the basic facts in a case are not disputed. Arguments are prepared and presented on a legal question (e.g., the constitutionality of a law or government action).  The following procedures are a slight adaptation of how the United State Supreme Court operates.* **ADVANCED GOVERNMENT MOOT COURT PROCEDURES**

* The justices will be seated at the front of the room.  The attorneys for each side will sit on opposite sides of the room facing the justices.
* The chief justice should ask each side to present its arguments in the following order:
* Opening Petitioner(s) **(11 minutes)**
* Opening Respondent(s) **(11 minutes)**
* Closing Petitioner(s) **(9 minutes)**
* Closing Respondent(s) **(9 minutes)**

Each lawyer(s) will have the above time per argument.

* Justices may not interrupt the Opening lawyer(s)/speaker(s) with questions until six minutes of the allotted time has elapsed for each of those speakers. If a speaker(s) finished early, the justices may step in and utilize the “Dead Time.” If the justices do not use their allotted time, the attorneys should be prepared to utilize the “Dead Time.”
* Justices may not interrupt the Closing lawyer(s)/speaker(s) with questions until three minutes of the allotted time has elapsed for each of those speakers. If a speaker finished early, the justices may step in and utilize the “Dead Time.” If the justices do not use their allotted time, the attorneys should be prepared to utilize the “Dead Time.”
* I will hold a sign up announcing when the justices may ask questions as well and when the time has expired. A yellow card will announce when there are thirty seconds before questions will start or end, green card will announce when the justices may ask questions and a red card signifies justice question time is completed.
* During each argument presentation, the justices can and should question the attorney in an effort to clarify the arguments. Attorneys may ask for time to consult with other members of their team before answering questions. **(This time is included in the total time allowed for the presentation and the lawyer should ask for a sidebar or to consult with his/her colleagues)**
* After all arguments have been presented the justices will exit the room to a predetermined location for deliberation.
* After coming back from deliberations, each justice will announce their decision (whether the justice is ruling for the petitioner or respondent) and must give reasons (Constitutional, Precedent, otherwise) for his or her decision.
* The chief justice will then tally the votes and announce the decision of the court. A decision is reached by a majority of votes from the justices.

***Case:*** *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen* **(Argued on November, 03 2021 but not decided)**  
  
**Legal Question:** Does New York’s law requiring that applicants for unrestricted concealed-carry licenses demonstrate a special need for self-defense violate the Second-Amendment?

LAWYERS: As an attorney for the petitioner and respondent your job is to:

* PETITIONER: the person/organization/company who appeals the lower court decision to a higher court
* RESPONDENT: the person/organization/company who argues that the lower court decision was correct

1. Discuss the case and develop arguments to persuade the Supreme Court to uphold/overturn the lower court decision. Arguments do not need to be rooted in legal technicalities.  Any argument that is persuasive from a philosophical, theoretical, conceptual or practical standpoint can be made.  Teams should rely on principles found or implied in the United States Constitution. Arguments can only be developed with the use of resources dispersed in class and discussion between members of the group, with the help of the lawyer provided, or something we learned in class.   
  
2. When addressing the Court each lawyer should begin by saying; ***“Mr./Ms. Chief Justice, and may it please the Court my name is \_\_\_\_ and I represent \_\_\_\_ in this case. The issue of this case is…”***

3. When answering questions from the justices, each lawyer should respond with the appropriate decorum addressing the specific justice by name by saying; ***“ Justice \_\_\_\_ or Mr./Ms. Chief Justice, …***

4. Be prepared to answer any questions the justices may ask you. If a question is posed by the justices that you do not know or should not know based upon material given in class, respond “It’s in the record...” This means it was included in the brief “you filed”. Attorneys may ask for time to consult with other members of their team before answering questions. (This time is included in the total time allowed for the presentation and the lawyer should ask for a sidebar or to consult with his/her colleague.)

5. If there is any **“dead time”** wherein the justices are not asking questions, this time should be utilized by the attorney to elaborate on any information that was not able to be discussed before the questioning session began.

6. Remember to rise when the justices enter or exit the room or when you are addressing the Court.

**Tips:**

* **Treat the Moot Court not as a specific case but as a Constitutional principle.**
* **This is about the Constitution, political liberties, and the law. Don’t argue the facts, argue the Constitution (not a should or shouldn’t, instead it’s a can or can’t).**
* **Articulate your side’s position and what you believe is the issue or interest; Personal liberties v. Society’s needs. Why is your side’s interest more important?**
* **Answer questions briefly and directly**
* **Try to help the justices figure out a way to decide the case your way. Don’t fight them.**

**Reflection Questions : To Be Completed and Turned in with Self Evaluation Form**   
1. Explain the role you played during the moot court. Did your role have any influence on the decision? Explain why/why not.  
  
2. Name 3 specific things you learned from the moot court experience.  
  
3. How do you think this court simulation went overall? Were you happy with this simulation or unhappy with some aspect of what occurred? What improvements can be made to improve this activity? Explain  
  
4. What could your TEAM have done differently to have performed better in this Mini Moot Court? Who did what and would you want to work with them again?   
  
5. Explain. What could YOU have done differently to have performed better in this Mini Moot Court? Did you find the grading system fair? What could be changed? Explain. How would you grade your overall performance? Justify your grade.

**ASSOCIATE JUSTICES:** As a United States Supreme Court Justice, your job is to:

1. Select a student to serve as Chief Justice (I chose the Chief Justice for this go around).   
  
2. Create an individual placard that references your position: Justice \_\_\_\_.   
  
3. Review the case and think of questions to ask the attorneys. Prepare questions to ask of each side. Questions should be clarifying, trying to get more information from the attorneys to make a decision. When designing the questions you need to ask yourself what sort of information you as a justice need to know before you can reasonably decide this case. Questions should include EACH of the following:   
 *a)* ***the Constitution****: questions concerning the meaning and application of the principle addressed  
 b)* ***precedent****; how should earlier court decision affect this case  
 c)* ***hypothetical****; possible ramifications if you decide in the favor of either side.   
 d)* ***clarification****; what about this particular case do you want to know more about***Tips:**

* **Treat the Moot Court not as a specific case but as a Constitutional principle.**
* **Don’t argue the facts. This is about the Constitution and the law.**
* **Think about (write down) questions for both sides**
* **Prepare questions, not speeches.**
* **Consider how a ruling in the case might affect other cases – ask hypotheticals. (cheeseburgers v. guns-If regulating guns is about saving lives, can you ban cheeseburgers).**
* **Remember, we are always willing to infringe upon other rights but what if this affected you or a loved one, would that change our opinion (voting criteria-what if we end on the wrong side of that voting criteria, how to boil a live frog).**
* **Remember that the lawyers only have the material you’ve seen –don’t ask about the “record below” or about precedents not in the materials you’ve received.**

4. Listen carefully to the arguments. Participants should consider all of the facts that have been **established** at the trial. Teams may not argue the accuracy of the facts.  
 **Reminders: a. Let the lawyers finish answering your question(s) before you ask a new question. b. Only interrupt if there is an error in logic, law, or they are filibustering.**

5. Be sure to consider the impact of your decision on other situations that may arise in the future.  
  
6. Announce your decision, whether you think the decision of the lower court should be upheld or overturned, after each side has presented its case. Each justice must give reasons for his or her decision. You do not have to agree. The decision will be based on the majority vote.  
  
 **Reminder: Make sure the lawyers are allowed to finish answering the question(s) before other justices ask a new question. Only allow interruptions if there is an error in logic, law, or they are filibustering.  
  
 Reflection Questions: To Be Completed and Turned in with Self Evaluation Form**   
  
1. What was the most effective argument on the petitioner side of the debate? Why was it effective? What was the most effective argument on the respondent side of the debate? Why was it effective?   
  
2. Name 3 specific things you learned from the moot court experience.  
  
3. How did the Justice Question time go? Did you perform well during the question time? The justices as a group?   
  
4. How do you think this court simulation went overall? Were you happy with this simulation or unhappy with some aspect of what occurred? What improvements can be made to improve this activity? Explain  
  
5. Explain. What could YOU have done differently to have performed better in this Mini Moot Court? Did you find the grading system fair? What could be changed? Explain. How would you grade your overall performance? Justify your grade.   
  
6. Why did you vote for the team you chose as winner?

**CHIEF JUSTICE:** As the United States Supreme Chief Justice, your job is to: Preside over the moot court. As the presiding officer of the Court, you will be in charge of the hearing and those duties will include, but are not limited to:  
  
1. Create an individual placard that references your position: Chief Justice\_\_\_\_   
  
2. Take charge of the proceedings of the Court by:

* Leading justices to the bench
* Seating the audience and lawyers;  
   **“Please be seated”; ‘We will now here the case of \_\_\_\_. The questions we are asked to resolve today is \_\_\_\_.”**
* Call on the attorneys to present their arguments;   
  **“Petitioner/Respondent, are you ready to present your arguments?**

**“Petitioner/Respondent, you have 11/0 minutes… You may begin”**

* Initiate Justice questions and recognize other justices to ask questions when applicable. I will hold a sign up announcing when questioning can begin as well and when the time has expired.
* End questioning period of lawyers by justices and time allotted per lawyer presentation  
   **“ Thank you \_\_\_\_, your time is up…**
* Lead discussion after oral argument and determine order in which justices will vote. Focus on the following:
* Which team presented the best evidence (cited cases) to back up their points and quoted from the materials?
* Which team’s arguments were more logical and coherent?
* Which team best anticipated your concerns and addressed them?
* Did either team not use language that was correct, clear, and appropriate?
* Which team persuaded you by what the speakers said and/or the manners in which they delivered the speech?

2. Announce the Court’s decision by:  
 a) Calling on each associate justice to give reasons for his or her decision.   
 b) Tally the vote of the Court and determine which side received the majority vote.

c) Announce whether the decision of your Court upheld or overturned the lower court’s decision.

**Reflection Questions: To Be Completed and Turned in with Self Evaluation Form**

1. What was the most effective argument on the petitioner side of the debate? Why was it effective? What was the most effective argument on the respondent side of the debate? Why was it effective?   
  
2. Name 3 specific things you learned from the moot court experience.  
  
3. How did the Justice Question time go? Did you perform well during the question time? The justices as a group?   
  
4. How do you think this court simulation went overall? Were you happy with this simulation or unhappy with some aspect of what occurred? What improvements can be made to improve this activity? Explain  
  
5. Explain. What could YOU have done differently to have performed better in this Mini Moot Court? Did you find the grading system fair? What could be changed? Explain. How would you grade your overall performance? Justify your grade.   
  
6. Why did you vote for the team you chose as winner?