

Key Georgia Supreme Court Disciplinary Cases for Criminal Justice Ethics Instruction

This document compiles selected Georgia Supreme Court disciplinary decisions relevant to lessons in The Broken Gavel™ curriculum for Criminal Justice majors. Each case illustrates ethical rules, misconduct scenarios, and disciplinary outcomes that align with course learning objectives on legal ethics, client rights, and accountability.

1. In the Matter of Chadrick A. Mance — Public Reprimand for Rule 1.1 Violation (2025)

Date Decided: February 18, 2025

Summary: Attorney Chadrick A. Mance filed a petition admitting a violation of Rule 1.1 (competence). The Georgia Supreme Court issued a public reprimand, in line with the State Bar's recommendation, instead of imposing more severe sanctions.

Relevance: Demonstrates the importance of competence and professional self-reporting in mitigating sanctions.

Rules Involved: Rule 1.1 – Competence.

2. In the Matter of Melnick — Six-Month Suspension for Rules 1.3, 1.4, and 8.4(a)(4) Violations

Date: August 13, 2024

Summary: Attorney Melnick was found to have violated Rule 1.3 (diligence), Rule 1.4 (communication), and Rule 8.4(a)(4) (dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation). The Special Master recommended a suspension; the Review Board initially reduced the penalty, but the Court upheld a six-month suspension.

Relevance: Closely mirrors the factual scenarios in The Broken Gavel involving



failure to communicate critical case information and dishonest conduct.

Rules Involved: Rules 1.3, 1.4, 8.4(a)(4).

3. In re: Anthony O. Van Johnson — Maximum Penalty for Rules 1.4 and 1.16(d) Violations

Summary: The Court held that the maximum penalty for violations of Rule 1.4 (communication) and Rule 1.16(d) (termination of representation) is a public reprimand.

Relevance: Useful for understanding limits of disciplinary actions and for discussing proportionality in sanctions.

Rules Involved: Rules 1.4, 1.16(d).

4. Georgia Appeals Judge Christian Coomer — Removal from Bench & Suspension

Date: Removal from bench in August 2023; law license suspended until August 2025.

Summary: Judge Coomer exploited a vulnerable client financially, borrowed funds under unethical terms, and misused campaign funds for personal expenses. The Supreme Court removed him from judicial office and suspended his law license for two years.

Relevance: Highlights extreme breaches of trust, fiduciary duty, and professional ethics, making it highly applicable to discussions of client exploitation and systemic accountability.

Rules Involved: Multiple, including 8.4(a)(4).

Integration into Course Lessons

- **Case Context: Communication Breakdown** — Use Melnick to illustrate how failure to communicate and lack of diligence directly harms clients.
- **Ethics of Storytelling & Client Rights** — Use Coomer as an example of abuse of power and fiduciary betrayal.
- **Understanding Sanctions** — Use Van Johnson to explore proportionality in disciplinary consequences.
- **Self-Reporting and Mitigation** — Use Mance to discuss how self-reporting can affect sanction outcomes.