

The Broken Gavel™ Study Guide for Criminal Justice Majors

The *Broken Gavel™ Study Guide for Criminal Justice Majors* is designed to support students in understanding legal ethics, client rights, and systemic accountability through the lens of lived experience. Created as a companion to *The Broken Gavel: A Sneak Peek* by Dashawn Mayweather, this guide integrates narrative excerpts, applied case studies, and ethical frameworks to make the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct relevant and approachable.

Directions:

Use this study guide alongside the assigned memoir excerpts and classroom discussion. Each section includes background context, knowledge checks, and applied activities that encourage critical thinking and reflective practice. Students should read the provided chapters first, then engage with the case questions, practice activities, and assessments to deepen their understanding.

Purpose:

The purpose of this resource is to bridge the gap between abstract legal rules and their impact on real people. By grounding analysis in attorney misconduct, client advocacy, and ethical dilemmas, this study guide helps students:

- Develop fluency in key **Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct**.
- Strengthen their ability to spot and evaluate ethical violations.
- Reflect on the human cost of misconduct and the role of accountability in justice.

This guide is not just about learning the rules, it is about cultivating the judgment, empathy, and critical skills needed to enter the criminal justice field as ethical and effective practitioners.



Introduction

This study guide provides Criminal Justice majors with an immersive, real-world exploration of legal ethics, attorney misconduct, and systemic accountability. Through narrative excerpts, applied case studies, and ethical analysis, students will develop the critical skills needed to evaluate and respond to breaches of professional responsibility. Drawing on *The Broken Gavel: A Sneak Peek*, the guide integrates Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct, specifically **Rules 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, and 8.4(a)(4)**, to provide a lens for understanding misconduct and client advocacy.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this guide, you will be able to:

1. Define and explain key Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct relevant to client communication and ethical practice.
2. Identify violations of professional responsibility in real and hypothetical cases.
3. Apply ethical decision-making frameworks to legal scenarios.
4. Evaluate the impact of attorney misconduct on client rights and justice outcomes.
5. Engage in reflective practice to strengthen professional judgment.

Section 1: Case Context - 'How Did I Get Here?'

In this chapter from *The Broken Gavel*, the author discovers her divorce judgment was entered without her knowledge, attendance, or consent. Her attorney failed to communicate critical court dates and misrepresented the reasons for her absence.

Case Focus: Violations of **Rule 1.4 (Communication)** and **Rule 8.4(a)(4) (Dishonesty, Fraud, Deceit, or Misrepresentation)**.



Knowledge Check

1. What are the communication requirements under **Rule 1.4**, and how were they breached in this case?
2. How might an attorney's dishonesty about case events affect a client's legal rights and case outcomes?
3. What immediate steps should a client take upon discovering a judgment entered without their knowledge?

Section 2: Legal Terms Decoded

Selected entries from The Broken Gavel's Legal Terms Decoded provide both the textbook definition and lived experience interpretation.

Example: Retainer Agreement – Formal contract between a client and attorney outlining representation, payment, and obligations. In this case, it marked the beginning of professional neglect and emotional harm.

Practice Activity

Choose one Legal Term Decoded entry and:

- Write its formal legal definition.
- Summarize how it was applied or violated in the memoir.
- Suggest a policy or procedural reform that could prevent similar issues in the future.

Section 3: 'The Confidante Clause' – Ethics of Storytelling

In this chapter, the author confronts a friend who publicly shared parts of her private life without consent. This section examines ethical obligations when handling sensitive personal information in legal and non-legal contexts.



Discussion Prompts

1. Where is the line between public storytelling and private violation?
2. How might unauthorized disclosures harm clients in legal cases?
3. Should there be professional consequences for legal professionals who violate confidentiality outside the courtroom?

Section 4: Applied Scenario – 'If This Were Your Case...'

Scenario: You represent a client in a family law matter. A final judgment is entered without their knowledge or participation. Your notes show you were aware of the hearing but did not inform the client.

Questions

1. Which rules of professional conduct are implicated?
2. What remedial actions should you take immediately upon discovering this oversight?
3. How would you communicate with both the client and the court to restore trust and remedy the harm?

Section 5: Assessment

Final Assessment:

- Short answer: Explain how Rule **8.4(a)(4)** applies to attorney dishonesty in The Broken Gavel.
- Essay: Propose a set of client rights protections that could have prevented the events described in 'How Did I Get Here?'
- Group project: Develop a mock 'Client Bill of Rights' for presentation in class.

Resources for Further Study

- Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct – State Bar of Georgia
- ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct
- The Broken Gavel Podcast – Episodes on legal ethics and client advocacy