

HS Special Committee
Graded Model United Nations XI

February 27-March 1st, 2026



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Introduction from the Chairs

Hello delegates,

We are your chairs, Maria, Manuela, and André, for the Special Committee for GMUN XI! We are so excited to see you debate *The People v. Mike Ross* and *State Bar of New York v. Pearson Specter Litt*. As chairs, or in our case, judges, we will monitor the flow of the trial and support you in any way we can. We understand that this may be the first Model UN conference or first trial committee for some of you, and we are so thrilled that we get to be a part of this learning experience with you. This topic guide is the first way through which we help you; we have compiled some background information and procedural changes that we hope you will utilize to learn more about your topic, in addition to your individual research. For more experienced delegates, we hope you take this opportunity to improve your skills and take on challenges. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to any of us. We are here to help and look forward to watching you debate!

Kind regards,

Maria, Manuela, and André

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Guide to Researching

The following information will serve to guide you in your research.

The first thing you should do is find the basics about your character, what their position is, what they know leading up to the trial, and what their relationships are. The sources you use should be reliable— meaning that they should either be provided by the chairs/judges or in the actual show, before the trial's commencement in Season 5 Episode 14. Additionally, simply because information is present in the show doesn't mean your character has access to it; for example, Harvey already knows that Mike is guilty, but Anita Gibbs does not. Furthermore, remember that different characters will have different goals and may or may not lie (as both witnesses and attorneys) to achieve their goals. Below are some questions you should answer in preparation:

1. What is my character's stake in this?
2. What are my character's motivations and goals?
3. What is my character's past?
4. What do my characters' relationships with other characters look like?

Continue reading and understanding the information within the topic guide, and expand your knowledge by asking yourself additional questions and seeking answers. Your chairs have worked very hard to ensure that this topic guide provides you with foundational knowledge on what you will be discussing, but don't be afraid to take your learning further!

Good luck, and please reach out to us if any clarification is needed.

Procedural Changes

Delegates Roles

In the trial committee, all delegates will assume dual roles, serving both as attorneys and witnesses. This means that they will be able to question other delegates during direct and cross-examinations, whilst also being subject to questioning from fellow delegates. Moreover, delegates will be divided into two sides/counsels for each trial: the Defense and the Prosecution, each advocating for their perspective. The chairs will serve as judges, wielding the power to decide on a final verdict. Additionally, due to the nature of this committee and its size, some new roles will be created, such as State Prosecutors and Assistant District Attorneys. If there are any questions about such roles, please email the chairs.

Opening Statements

Like the UN Councils, the trial of Mike Ross will begin with a compulsory opening statement from every delegate. This statement should last around two minutes, and delegates must present their plea (whether they believe the figure is guilty or not guilty) when delivering this speech.

Evidence

Evidence is a pivotal aspect of a Trial Committee, as delegates should use it to substantiate their case and enhance their credibility. Furthermore, evidence will be previously produced/gathered by the chairs and revealed after opening statements. The chairs will distribute evidence according to the flow of debate, but in every committee session, there will be something new. It is up to delegates to select which pieces of evidence they wish to present to the judges during direct

examinations. For this trial, evidence will encompass diverse elements such as articles from the newspaper, formulated letters, forensic findings, images, and guest speakers.

Direct Examination

Direct Examinations are a type of moderated debate after an unmoderated caucus. For Direct Examinations, delegates can deliver a brief speech presenting **one piece of evidence** to the judges. They will then be questioned by one delegate from their respective side for two minutes. Unlike committees that follow parliamentary procedure, delegates do not need to ask for “follow-ups” to ask another question. Instead, for two minutes, the delegate conducting the Direct Examination will be able to ask as many questions as they desire. It is imperative to note that delegates from the Prosecution side are called to the stand first by Mock Trial Procedure. Delegates don't need to conduct examinations but it is strongly encouraged by the chairs as it is a great opportunity to express their point of view.

Cross Examination

After the Direct Examination, the delegate who is already on the stand will be answering questions from a delegate belonging to their opposing counsel. Like the Direct Examination, Cross Examinations also last two minutes, and the delegate conducting the examination will be able to ask as many questions as they desire.

Resolutions

For this committee, verdicts will serve as a means to fulfill the objectives typically achieved through resolutions. Verdicts are formal documents comprising approximately 200 words, where it is crucial to incorporate a plea and reference the aforementioned evidence that substantiates the plea. The Verdict should also include the desired course of action: should these figures be

executed, exiled, or pardoned? Both the Defence and the Prosecution have to present one Verdict, which the judges will take into consideration before achieving a final decision.

Objections

An objection is a formal protest raised by a party or counsel during a legal proceeding asserting that an error occurred. Objections can only be made during Direct and Cross-Examinations. Once an objection is made, the judges will come to a ruling where they will either sustain or overrule the objection. Please note objections should not be used to disrupt the flow of debate, only to add to it.

Find below the list of objections delegates can use:

Objection	When to use
Relevance	Used when the evidence presented does not directly relate to the case.
Hearsay	Is appropriate when a statement is being offered for its truth, but the declarant is unavailable.
Leading Question	Raise when the attorney is suggesting the answer within the question, typically during direct examination.
Speculation	When a witness is asked to guess or infer beyond their personal knowledge.
Assumes Facts not in Evidence	When a question presumes facts that have not been established by evidence.

Narrative	Use if a witness is allowed to give lengthy, unresponsive answers instead of answering the specific question asked.
Opinion/Testimony	Appropriate when a witness is offering an opinion that they are not qualified to give or when factual testimony is required instead of an opinion.
Cumulative	Raise when the evidence being presented adds nothing new and repeats.

Topic A: The People v. Mike Ross — Criminal Fraud and Impersonation Case



Mike Ross during a trial (Everett Collection)

Background Information

I. Origin of the Problem

The case of Mike Ross originates from a prolonged and deliberate act of **fraudulent misrepresentation** within the New York legal system. Mike Ross, despite lacking a law degree and formal **bar admission**, practiced law at Pearson Specter Litt, one of New York's most elite corporate law firms. His employment and continued legal practice raise serious concerns regarding **unauthorized practice of law, impersonation, and systemic institutional failure**.

Under New York law, the legal profession is strictly regulated through **bar admission**, which requires graduation from an accredited law school, successful completion of the **bar examination**, and a formal **character and fitness review**. These safeguards exist to ensure **competence, ethical integrity, and public trust**. Mike Ross bypassed all three. By presenting

himself as a licensed attorney, he engaged in **criminal deception**, misleading courts, clients, opposing counsel, and regulatory authorities.

The origins of the issue extend beyond individual misconduct. Ross's hiring was facilitated by senior members of Pearson Specter Litt, who knowingly circumvented standard hiring and verification procedures. This raises questions of **conspiracy**, **aiding and abetting**, and **willful blindness**. Over time, multiple partners and senior staff became aware of Ross's lack of credentials, indicating a pattern of **institutional concealment** rather than an isolated lapse.

A central legal issue in this case concerns **mens rea**, or criminal intent. Prosecutors argue that Ross's sustained deception, continued courtroom appearances, and assumption of attorney authority demonstrate **intentional fraud**. The defense may argue **lack of malicious intent**, citing Ross's exceptional legal competence and the absence of direct client harm. However, under criminal law, **outcome does not negate illegality**; the act of impersonation itself constitutes a prosecutable offense.

This case also implicates core **ethical duties** of the legal profession, particularly **candor to the tribunal** and **fiduciary responsibility** to clients. Attorneys are officers of the court, and misrepresentation undermines judicial legitimacy. If legal outcomes were influenced by an unlicensed attorney, the **validity of prior judgments** and settlements may be challenged, creating systemic instability.

Beyond legality, the case raises concerns of **selective accountability** within elite institutions. Ross's intelligence and success allowed him to evade scrutiny, suggesting that performance and results may have been prioritized over regulatory compliance. This challenges assumptions of equal enforcement and exposes vulnerabilities in professional oversight.

Ultimately, the origin of this problem lies at the intersection of **individual criminal conduct** and **institutional complicity**. While Mike Ross is the defendant, the circumstances reveal failures in supervision, ethics enforcement, and professional culture.

II. Key Actors and Relationships

Pearson Specter Litt operates as a **partnership**, meaning senior lawyers share both authority and liability. Mike Ross was hired directly by a senior partner and embedded within the firm's legal operations rather than acting as an external infiltrator. His work contributed to firm success, client outcomes, and revenue.

Senior leadership exercised **control over hiring, supervision, and disclosure**, creating a structure where silence protected both Ross and the firm. Over time, awareness of Ross's status expanded internally, producing a network of **shared risk, mutual dependence, and institutional protection**. These relationships are central to determining responsibility and accountability.

III. Facts Not in Dispute

- Mike Ross did not attend law school
- Mike Ross was not admitted to the New York State Bar
- He practiced law and performed attorney functions
- Senior members of Pearson Specter Litt were aware of this fact

IV. Steps Taken to Address the Issue

Upon discovery, criminal prosecutors initiated proceedings for **fraud, impersonation, and unauthorized practice of law**. These actions seek to establish **criminal liability** through penalties such as **incarceration, financial fines**, or negotiated **plea agreements**.

Regulatory bodies began reviewing Pearson Specter Litt's conduct, initiating internal investigations to assess **ethical violations, due diligence failures**, and possible concealment. In response, the firm implemented **compliance reforms**, stricter **credential verification**, and internal audits.

Leadership restructuring, cooperation with authorities, and adoption of **corrective governance mechanisms** were undertaken to mitigate institutional damage. The case also prompted broader debate within the legal community regarding **bar oversight, regulatory enforcement**, and accountability in elite firms.

V. Suggested Questions for Further Research

- What constitutes **unauthorized practice of law** under New York statutes?
- How is **mens rea** established in fraud and impersonation cases?
- Can judgments influenced by unlicensed attorneys be invalidated?
- To what extent can supervisors face criminal liability?
- How do **plea bargains** function in white-collar prosecutions?
- What precedents exist for professional impersonation cases?

Bloc Positions

Harvey Specter,

Focuses on loyalty, intent, and selective accountability. Harvey argues that while Mike Ross technically violated the law, his actions lacked malicious intent and caused no client harm. Emphasis is placed on institutional responsibility, prosecutorial overreach, and the role of senior partners who knowingly enabled Ross's employment.

Mike Ross,

Centers on mitigation and moral complexity rather than denial of facts. This bloc acknowledges the unauthorized practice of law but argues the absence of mens rea for fraud, highlighting competence, positive client outcomes, and coercive institutional dynamics. Advocates for leniency, plea bargaining, or alternative sentencing.

Jessica Pearson,

Balances legal realism with institutional survival. This bloc recognizes the illegality of Ross's actions but stresses systemic failure, shared responsibility, and the need to protect the firm's stability. Supports cooperation with regulators while limiting criminal exposure for leadership through negotiated accountability.

Louis Litt,

Emphasizes procedural integrity and equal enforcement of the law. This bloc argues that rules exist for a reason and that exceptions—no matter how talented the individual—undermine the profession. Supports strict adherence to licensing laws and clear consequences to restore ethical order.

Rachel Zane,

Advocates for professional integrity, merit, and fairness. This bloc highlights the injustice to law students and attorneys who followed the proper path. While sympathetic to Ross personally, it supports the enforcement of licensing standards to protect the legitimacy of the legal profession.

Anita Gibbs

Represents strict rule-of-law enforcement. This bloc argues that the facts clearly establish criminal fraud, impersonation, and intentional deception. Competence and outcomes are deemed irrelevant. The bloc seeks conviction to deter elite impunity and reaffirm that no individual or institution is above the law.

Sheila Sazs,

Focuses on personal consequences and collateral harm. This bloc emphasizes how Ross's actions affected individuals outside the firm, including emotional, relational, and reputational damage. Supports accountability while questioning whether the legal system adequately considers private harms.

Topic B: State Bar of New York v. Pearson Specter Litt — Institutional Ethics and Misconduct Inquiry



Staff of Pearson Specter Litt (Everett Collection)

Background Information

I. Origin of the Issue

The disciplinary proceedings against Pearson Specter Litt arise directly from revelations uncovered during the criminal investigation into Mike Ross. While Ross's actions triggered questions of **individual criminal liability**, the continued operation of the firm during and after his employment exposed deeper concerns of **institutional misconduct**, **ethical negligence**, and **systemic governance failure**.

Law firms operating in New York are regulated not only by criminal law but by binding **professional codes of conduct** enforced by the State Bar. These rules impose affirmative duties of **supervision, competence, candor, and ethical compliance** on firm leadership. Managing partners and senior attorneys are responsible for ensuring that all legal work is performed by individuals who are properly **licensed, credentialed, and authorized** to practice law.

The prolonged employment of an unlicensed attorney at Pearson Specter Litt indicates a breakdown of **internal oversight mechanisms**. Ethical standards require firms to implement reasonable procedures to verify credentials, monitor compliance, and promptly address irregularities. The failure to detect—or the decision to ignore—Mike Ross’s status suggests either **gross negligence** or **willful institutional tolerance**.

The inquiry further examines whether firm leadership engaged in **misrepresentation by omission**. By allowing Ross to appear as a licensed attorney, the firm may have misled courts, clients, and opposing counsel. Under professional ethics rules, silence in the face of known misconduct can constitute an **ethical breach**, particularly when it enables continued deception.

A key concept in this inquiry is **constructive knowledge**, meaning that senior partners may be held responsible not only for what they knew, but for what they reasonably should have known. In large partnerships, authority is decentralized, but ethical responsibility remains collective. This raises questions of **shared liability** and **organizational accountability**.

The State Bar also examines the firm’s **internal culture**. Evidence suggests that performance, billable success, and competitive advantage may have been prioritized over **regulatory compliance**. Such an environment can foster **ethical erosion**, where rule-breaking becomes normalized if it produces favorable outcomes. This case, therefore, serves as a test of whether elite institutions are held to the same standards as smaller or less powerful firms.

Additionally, the inquiry explores **vicarious liability**, under which institutions may be sanctioned for the actions of their agents if those actions occurred within the scope of employment and

benefited the organization. If Pearson Specter Litt gained reputational, financial, or strategic advantages from Ross's legal work, the firm may bear responsibility regardless of intent.

Beyond internal consequences, the case has implications for **public confidence** in the legal profession. Bar associations exist to protect the integrity of the justice system. Failure to impose meaningful consequences for systemic misconduct risks undermining trust in professional self-regulation and reinforcing perceptions of **elite immunity**.

Thus, the origin of this issue lies not in a single unethical act but in **institutional failure**, **leadership responsibility**, and the boundaries of ethical enforcement within powerful legal organizations.

II. Key Actors and Relationships

Pearson Specter Litt operates as a partnership, meaning authority and responsibility are distributed among managing partners, named partners, and firm leadership. Ethical compliance depends on cooperation between legal leadership, internal counsel, and compliance structures.

The State Bar acts as an external regulatory authority with the power to discipline both individuals and institutions. Clients, courts, and the broader legal community are indirect stakeholders whose trust is affected by the firm's conduct.

These relationships shape whether responsibility is viewed as **individual**, **collective**, or **systemic**, and influence the scope of potential sanctions.

III. Facts Not in Dispute

- An unlicensed individual practiced law at Pearson Specter Litt
- Firm leadership failed to prevent or disclose this conduct
- The firm benefited from the legal work performed

IV. Measures Taken to Address the Issue

Following disclosure, the State Bar initiated formal **disciplinary proceedings** against Pearson Specter Litt. The firm was required to submit internal communications, hiring records, compliance documentation, and governance policies for review. Possible outcomes include **formal sanctions, probationary monitoring, mandatory restructuring, or disbarment of individual partners.**

In response, the firm implemented corrective actions, including leadership changes, strengthened **compliance frameworks**, enhanced ethics training, and cooperation with regulators. Such measures are often presented as evidence of **good-faith remediation.**

At the industry level, the case prompted renewed debate over expanding **bar oversight authority**, increasing **audit powers**, and improving **whistleblower protections** within large legal partnerships.

V. Suggested Questions for Further Research

- What ethical duties do managing partners owe under State Bar regulations?
- How does **constructive knowledge** affect institutional liability?
- What sanctions can bar associations impose on firms as opposed to individuals?

- How does **vicarious liability** function in professional partnerships?
- How effective are internal compliance systems in preventing misconduct?
- Should elite law firms face heightened regulatory oversight?
- How should disciplinary bodies balance punishment with institutional reform?

Bloc Positions

Harvey Specter

This bloc prioritizes damage control and proportional accountability. Harvey Specter acknowledges that firm leadership failed in oversight but argues that sanctions should focus on individuals who exercised managerial authority rather than the firm as a whole. Drawing on prior collaboration with Jessica Pearson, this bloc supports internal reform and cooperation with the State Bar while resisting penalties that would cripple Pearson Specter Litt's clients, employees, or ongoing cases.

Jessica Pearson

This bloc emphasizes collective responsibility paired with institutional reform. As managing partner during key periods, Jessica Pearson accepts that leadership bore ethical duties but argues that accountability should result in structural correction rather than symbolic punishment. Having previously coordinated with Harvey Specter and internal compliance staff, this bloc supports negotiated sanctions, probationary oversight, and governance restructuring to preserve public trust while ensuring the firm's survival.

Louis Litt

This bloc centers on strict compliance and equal enforcement of professional rules. Louis Litt argues that failure to uphold licensing and disclosure standards undermines the legitimacy of the

legal profession, regardless of intent or outcome. While historically aligned with firm leadership, this bloc is more willing to accept harsh sanctions to demonstrate accountability, believing that credibility can only be restored through visible adherence to ethical regulation.

Daniel Hardman

This bloc frames the proceedings as proof of long-standing leadership failure. Daniel Hardman argues that Pearson Specter Litt's culture prioritized power and profit over ethical governance, creating conditions where misconduct could thrive. Drawing on his prior involvement in firm leadership disputes, this bloc advocates for severe sanctions, partner discipline, and external oversight to dismantle entrenched institutional protectionism.

Sean Cahill

This bloc represents regulatory enforcement and systemic integrity. As a federal investigator with experience examining institutional misconduct, Sean Cahill argues that the firm's failures reflect more than negligence—they reveal a pattern of willful blindness. This bloc supports strong disciplinary measures, enhanced audit authority, and expanded bar oversight, and has previously coordinated with prosecutorial and regulatory bodies during the Ross investigation.

Pearson Specter Litt Compliance and Risk Officer

This bloc focuses on remediation, governance reform, and forward-looking compliance. It acknowledges institutional failure but argues that corrective measures already undertaken demonstrate good-faith efforts to prevent recurrence. Working closely with Jessica Pearson and firm leadership, this bloc supports probationary monitoring, mandatory compliance audits, and ethics training as alternatives to punitive sanctions that could destabilize the firm.

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