

Vocabulary – Chapter 15

criminal law	The branch of law that regulates the conduct of individuals, defines crimes, and provides punishments for criminal acts. In criminal cases, the government is the prosecutor, because criminal acts are viewed as crimes against society.
civil law	The branch of law that concerns relationships between private parties. A civil action is usually brought by someone who claims to have suffered a loss because of another party's actions.
burden of proof	The obligation in a legal case to prove allegations by presenting strong supporting evidence. In a criminal case, this burden rests on the prosecution and in a civil case on the plaintiff.
defendant	The person or party in a criminal trial who is charged with committing a crime. Or, in a civil case, the person or party being sued.
prosecution	The attorneys representing the government and the people in a criminal case. It is the prosecution's job to show why a person accused of a crime should be found guilty as charged.
plaintiff	The person or party who brings a lawsuit, or legal action, against another party in a civil case.
writ of certiorari	An order from the Supreme Court to a lower court to provide the records of a case the Court has decided to review.
legal brief	A written document drawn up by an attorney that presents the facts and points of law in a client's case.