

Cynthia V. Ward

Professor of Law · William & Mary Law School
757-561-1341 · cvward@wm.edu

EDUCATION

J.D., Yale Law School

B.A., Wellesley College

Wellesley College Scholar

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Professor of Law, William & Mary School of Law

1997 – present

Professor of Law, Arizona State College of Law

1995 – 1997

Associate Professor of Law, Arizona State College of Law

1991 – 1995

RESEARCH INTERESTS

My recent scholarship operates at the intersection of criminal law doctrine and normative theory, using doctrinal analysis as a stress test for competing theoretical frameworks. Current projects examine the asymmetric deployment of neuroscience-based trauma concepts in criminal law, and the normative foundations of the self-defense justification in the criminal context. Earlier work has addressed trauma and repressed memory as a basis for criminal charges, stand-your-ground laws, involuntary commitment on grounds of mental illness, and the role of mens rea in criminal justice reform. A secondary interest in dispute resolution informs both my teaching and my faculty governance work.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION TRAINING & CREDENTIALS

Mediation and Conflict Resolution

Harvard Program on Negotiation · Certificate, Spring 2026

Mediation Skills and Process

NVMS Conflict Resolution Center · Certificate, Spring 2026

SELECTED COURSES

Criminal Law
Gender and Domestic Violence
Negotiation for Lawyers
Psychology in the Law of Crime
Self Defense in Law & Policy

SCHOLARSHIP

Works in Progress:

“Provocation in Self Defense” (Article)
“Trauma and Self Defense” (Article)

Selected Publications:

“Criminal Justice Reform and the Centrality of Intent,” 68 Villanova L. Rev. 51 (2023)
“Trauma and Memory in the Prosecution of Sexual Assault,” 45 Law and Psychology Review 87 (2021)
“Three Questions About ‘Stand Your Ground’ Law,” 95 Notre Dame L. Rev. Reflection 119 (2020)
“Criminal Culpability and the Political Meaning of Age,” 38 Crim. Justice Ethics 123 (2019) (review essay)
“‘Stand Your Ground’ and Self Defense,” 42 Am. J. Criminal Law 89 (2015)
“Mental Illness and Danger to Self,” 3 Mental Health L. & Pol. J. 253 (2014)

RECENT UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Vice President, William & Mary Faculty Assembly	2026 – 2027
Chair, W & M Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Hearing Procedures	Spr & Fall 2026
Chair, W & M Faculty Hearing Committee	2025 – 2026; Spr 2024
Law School Faculty Status Committee	2023 – 2025; 2019 – 2021
Residency Status Appeals Board	(2022-2023)

OTHER SERVICE

Legal Scholars Committee, American Psychology Law Society (APA)	2022 – 2025
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