

PSC 316-01: Introduction to Law
Spring 2008
Tuesday and Thursday, 11 am – 12:15 pm
Graham 209

Instructor & Office Hours:

Dr. Susan Johnson

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Office hours: Wednesdays 11 am – 2 pm, and by appointment

Course Catalog Description:

Analysis of the American legal system, focusing on the behavior of actors in that system, theoretical foundations of the system, and policy-making role of the courts.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- To give students an introductory understanding of the structure of the American court system
- To help students explore their expectations of the court system and appreciate the way courts influence politics and everyday life
- To show students how judges make decisions, and why this process is different from our long-held myths about judges
- To practice reading and analyzing written judicial opinions

Required Texts:

- Carp, Robert A., Ronald Stidham, and Kenneth L. Manning. 2007. *Judicial Process in America*. 7th edition. CQ Press.
- Katsh, M. Ethan and William Rose. 2006. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Legal Issues*. 12th edition. McGraw-Hill.
- Additional Readings on Blackboard/e-reserve.

Course Requirements:

Case summary sheets	15%
Participation in mini-debates	5%
Opinion papers (2)	30% (15% each)
Midterm	25%
Final	25%

HARD COPIES OF ALL SUMMARIES AND PAPERS ARE REQUIRED. I DO NOT ACCEPT EMAILED PAPERS OR CASE SUMMARIES (NO EXCEPTIONS!)

Case Summary sheets:

You will be required to turn in a case summary sheet for TEN (10) of the cases of your choice that we read in *Taking Sides*. The case summary sheet will serve to focus your reading on key arguments and issues in each of the cases. I will provide a template for your case summary sheets that you will follow for each case. Case summary sheets will be due at the beginning of class on the date that the case is assigned. Summaries should be typed (no exceptions!!!!)

Class Participation:

We will have "mini-debates" based on the issues in *Taking Sides*. The class will be divided into small groups on the days that issues from *Taking Sides* have been assigned. Each group will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each side as presented in the text. You will also record your groups' thoughts and disagreements about the issue on a debate participation sheet. Obviously, if you are not in attendance, you will receive a zero for participation for the date(s) missed.

Opinion Papers:

Each student will choose two (2) issues in *Taking Sides* and will write a short opinion paper for each one. The opinion paper should be no more than 4 pages long (typed, double-spaced, standard font & margins). It should include a *brief* summary of each side of the debate. The bulk of the paper will be a persuasive argument for one side or the other. You may but are not required to cite outside sources as part of your argument. Papers will be graded for grammar, organization, accurate summarization of the issues and persuasiveness. In grading the persuasiveness of your argument, I *will not* be looking at whether or not I personally agree with your position. Instead, I will look for whether or not you have addressed important points, including legal arguments, raised by the other side in the text and whether inconsistencies exist in your argument. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date listed in the schedule (see below).

Academic Honor Code:

I expect all students in this course to abide by both the letter and spirit of the university's academic integrity policy. **Violations of the university honor code will be prosecuted.** The full text of the Academic Integrity Policy can be viewed at:
<http://www.uncg.edu/reg/Policy/HonorPolicy.html>.

Students with Special Needs:

Students with special needs should contact the instructor during the first week of class. I will make every effort to accommodate the needs of students with special requirements.

Late Case Summary Sheets/Papers and Missed Debates/Exams:

Students are expected to turn case summaries and papers in on time and be present to take the exams at their scheduled times. Only in extraordinary circumstances will make-up opportunities exist. Students must notify me **PRIOR** to the missed exam or summary/paper/debate with a valid excuse and must be prepared to provide credible evidence (such as a written doctor's note) of the excuse. Excuses for late case summaries/papers and missed debates and exams after the fact will not be allowed, resulting in a failing grade for the missed summary, paper, debate, and/or exam. It is the instructor's sole discretion to determine whether or not an excuse is acceptable.

Make-up exams will be scheduled for the same day, time and place for everyone. The make-up exam time will be announced in class. Students will be allowed to make-up only one (1) exam during the semester.

Schedule of Topics: (Minor adjustments to the schedule may be made during the semester. Students are expected to keep up with any changes made to the schedule. Exam dates will not change).

*Note: Chapter numbers refer to the chapters in *Judicial Process in America*. Issue numbers refer to the topics in *Taking Sides*. Each day's reading assignments should be completed *prior* to class. **Case summaries are due on the date the issue is assigned.**

Tuesday, January 15th: Course introduction

Thursday, January 17th: Ch. 1 - Foundations of Law

Tuesday, January 22nd: Issue 1 – Enemy Combatants

Thursday, January 24th: Ch. 2 – Federal Judicial System

Tuesday, January 29th: Issue 2 - Abortion

Thursday, January 31st: Reserve reading (TBA) – The U.S. Supreme Court

Tuesday, February 5th: Ch. 3 – State Judicial System
Reserve reading (TBA)

Thursday, February 7th: Issue 3 – Physician-Assisted Suicide

Tuesday, February 12th: Issue 16 – Same-sex Marriage

Thursday, February 14th: Ch. 4 – Jurisdiction

Tuesday, February 19th: Ch. 5 – Federal Judges
Video – “Federal Judicial Selection Process”
Opinion Paper 1 due at the beginning of class

Thursday, February 21st: Ch. 6 – State Judges
Reserve reading (TBA)

Tuesday, February 26th & Thursday, February 28th - Video – “The Last Campaign”

Tuesday, March 4th: Ch. 8 – Lawyers, Litigants & Interest Groups
Reserve reading (TBA)
Review for Midterm exam

Thursday, March 6th: MIDTERM EXAM

Tuesday, March 11th: SPRING BREAK

Thursday, March 13th: SPRING BREAK

Tuesday, March 18th: Ch. 9 – Criminal Procedures

Thursday, March 20th: Issue 7 – Police Identification; Issue 9 - Thermal Imaging

Tuesday, March 25th: Ch. 10 – Rights of the Accused
Reserve reading (“Open Fields” case)

Thursday, March 27th: Issue 12 – Three-strikes laws; Issue 13 – Student drug testing

Tuesday, April 1st: Ch. 11 – The Civil Court Process

Thursday, April 3rd: NO CLASS

Tuesday, April 8th & Thursday April 10th: Video “A Civil Action”

Tuesday, April 15th: Issue 17 – Public School Liability

Thursday, April 17th: Ch. 12 & 13 – Judicial Decision Making

Tuesday, April 22nd: Ch. 14 – Implementation and Impact
Reserve reading (TBA)

Thursday, April 24th: Video – “Constitutional Conversation”

Tuesday, April 29th: Issue 15 – Cross burning; Issue 19 – Race-conscious Admissions Policies

Thursday, May 1st: Semester wrap-up and review
Opinion Paper 2 due at the beginning of class

Tuesday, May 13th: FINAL EXAM, Noon – 3 pm