

**PSC 316-01: Introduction to Law
Spring 2009
Tuesday and Thursday, 11 am – 12:15 pm
Graham 204**

Instructor & Office Hours:

Dr. Susan Johnson

Office: 233 Graham

Phone: (336) 256-0512

Email: swjohnso@uncg.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays 10 am – 1 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 may be placed on Blackboard/e-reserve.

Course Requirements:

Case briefs	15%
Participation in mini-debates	10%
Exam I	25%
Exam II	25%
Final exam	25%

Case Briefs:

You will be required to turn in case briefs for EIGHT (8) of the cases of your choice that we read in *Taking Sides*. The case brief will serve to focus your reading on key arguments and issues in each of the cases. I will provide a template for your case brief that you will follow for each case. Case briefs will be due at the beginning of class on the date that the case is assigned. Case briefs should be typed. **If you are absent, I will not accept your brief. 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. If time permits, we will discuss the issues as a class after small debate time has ended. **You will be permitted to miss ONE group debate during the semester without penalty.**

Exams:

Three in-class exams will be held during the semester. Exams will consist of multiple choice and/or short answer and essay questions. Success on these examinations will require a thorough understanding of the reading assignments and class discussions/lectures.

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. 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.

Missed Exams:

Students are expected to 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 with a valid excuse and must be prepared to provide credible evidence (such as a written doctor's note) of the excuse. Excuses for missed exams after the fact will not be allowed, resulting in a failing grade for the missed 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.

Extra credit: I occasionally offer extra credit as an incentive for attending department and/or university events as part of your educational enrichment. Extra credit is a privilege, not a right. If you cannot attend any of the events, it will not count against you. However, I will not offer other forms of extra credit as an alternative to events that you cannot attend regardless of the reason.

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 briefs are due on the date the issue is assigned.**

- 1/20 Introduction and course overview
- 1/22 Chapter 1 – Foundations of Law
- 1/27 **Issue 2 – Abortion (Group debate 1)**

- 1/29 Chapter 2 – The Federal Judicial System
- 2/3 **Issue 1 – Enemy Combatants (Group debate 2)**
- 2/5 Chapter 3 – State Judicial Systems
Issue 16 – Same-sex marriage
- 2/10 Chapter 4 - Jurisdiction & Policymaking Boundaries
Issue 3 – Physician-assisted suicide
- 2/12 Wrap-up and review
- 2/17 Exam I**
- 2/19 Chapter 6 – Federal Judges
- 2/24 Federal Judges: *Reserve reading*
- 2/26 Chapter 5 – State Judges
- 3/3 – 3/5 *Video – "The Last Campaign"*
- 3/10 – 3/12 Spring Break
- 3/17 Chapter 8 – Lawyers, Litigants & Interest Groups
Galanter, "Why the Haves Come Out Ahead" (Reserve reading)
- 3/19 Chapter 9 – Criminal Procedures
- 3/24 – 3/26 Chapter 10 – Criminal Rights
- 3/31 **Issue 9 – Police identification**
Issue 7 – Thermal imaging (Group debate 3)
- 4/2 **Issue 11 – Death Penalty for Juveniles (Group debate 4)**
Issue 12 – Three-strikes laws
Wrap-up and review
- 4/7 Exam II**
- 4/9 Chapter 11 – The Civil Court Process
- 4/14 Chapter 11 – The Civil Court Process
Issue 17 – Public School Liability (Group debate 5)
- 4/16 Chapter 12 – Decision Making by Trial Court Judges
- 4/21 Chapter 13 – Decision Making by Collegial Courts
Video - Justices' views on decision-making

- 4/23 Decision Making by Collegial Courts
Reserve reading
- 4/28 Chapter 14 – Implementation and Impact
Issue 15 – Cross burning (Group debate 6)
Issue 19 – Race-Conscious Admissions Policies
- 4/30 Wrap-up and review
- 5/7 Final Exam (Noon – 3 pm)**