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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 10:30am - 12:00 pm and by appointment  
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will introduce students to the judicial process within the American governmental system. Students will study the organization of courts, the individuals involved in the judicial arena, and the structure of the legal system, including trial and appellate courts. The course will focus on the relationship of politics to the behavior of judges, and to the structure and functioning of courts.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students will learn most importantly that judges are political actors and that courts are policy-making bodies. Students will gain an understanding about the structures and processes of court systems. Students will be able to critically evaluate the American judicial system and will demonstrate analytical skills through both written and spoken communication exercises.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students are required to read the assignments, be prepared for discussion, attend class on time and for the duration of the class and participate in class discussions. Two examinations will be given. The exams will be a combination of short answer and essay. The second (final) exam will not be a cumulative examination. Makeup examinations will be only for university excused absences or for those absences necessitated by a legitimate and documented illness. Students will also be required to complete a 12-15 page research paper. Attached is a list of nine topics with associated bibliographies. Each student must select one of the topics and find at least four appropriate additional sources. A list of some of the acceptable scholarly journals is attached. Scholarly research monographs are also acceptable. Students may use material from the textbooks in class, but these do not count as the additional sources. Students must post their topic on Moodle by 11:55PM Tuesday, February 5 (5 points), the four additional sources must be posted by 11:55PM Tuesday, February 26 (5 points), and the introductory section must be posted by 11:55PM Tuesday, March 5 (5 points). An initial draft of the research paper must be posted by 11:55PM Thursday, April 11 (25 points). Feedback will be provided on the drafts that can be incorporated into the final version of the paper. The final revised paper must be posted by 11:55PM Tuesday May 2 (80 points). Late papers (draft and final version) will be penalized 10
points for each 24-hour (or less) period beyond the deadline. The research paper will be addressed further in class. The two exams are worth 100 points each. Participation is worth 30 points. Participation is based on regular and punctual attendance, preparation and participation (including pop quizzes if necessary). This will be explained in class. Grades are based on the following scale:

314-350=A
279-313=B
244-278=C
209-243=D
Below 208=F

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 15-17</td>
<td>Introduction/Overview</td>
<td>Nuebauer, Chapter 1</td>
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<td>January 22-24</td>
<td>Legal Systems</td>
<td>Nuebauer, Chapter 2</td>
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<td>January 29-31</td>
<td>Federal and State Courts</td>
<td>Nuebauer, Chapters 3, 4</td>
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<td>February 5</td>
<td>RESEARCH TOPIC DUE</td>
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<td>February 5-7</td>
<td>Lawyers/Judges</td>
<td>Nuebauer, Chapters 5, 6</td>
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<td>February 12</td>
<td>MARDI GRAS HOLIDAY</td>
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<td>February 14-19</td>
<td>Litigants/Interest Groups/Media</td>
<td>Nuebauer, Chapter 7</td>
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<td>February 26</td>
<td>ADDITIONAL SOURCES DUE</td>
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<td>February 21-March 7</td>
<td>Criminal Trial Courts</td>
<td>Nuebauer, Chapters 8, 9</td>
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<td>March 5</td>
<td>INTRODUCTORY SECTION DUE</td>
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<td>March 12</td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAMINATION</td>
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<td>March 14-April 11</td>
<td>Civil Trial Courts</td>
<td>Nuebauer, Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, 12</td>
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<td>April 2-4</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK HOLIDAY</td>
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<td>April 11</td>
<td>DRAFT RESEARCH PAPER DUE</td>
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<td>April 16-18</td>
<td>Appellate Courts</td>
<td>Nuebauer, Chapter 13</td>
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<td>April 23-April 25</td>
<td>Supreme Court</td>
<td>Nuebauer, Chapters 14, 15, O'Brien, Chapters 1-3</td>
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<td>May 2</td>
<td>RESEARCH PAPERS DUE</td>
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<td>April 30 – May 2</td>
<td>Supreme Court</td>
<td>Nuebauer, Chapters 14, 15, O'Brien, Chapters 4-6</td>
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<td>May 8</td>
<td>FINAL EXAM – 12:30pm</td>
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Topics for Research Papers POLI 4023

Plea Bargaining


Prosecutorial Discretion


Income, Media and Other Effects in Crime Disposition


Juries


Judicial Selection


Resources, Courts and Winners and Losers


Courts and Interest Groups


Policy Impact of Court Decisions


Supreme Court Decision-Making


Segal, Jeffrey A. and Harold J. Spaeth. 2002. The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model, Chapter 2. NY: Cambridge University Press. (See me for this.)


POSSIBLE JOURNALS

American Politics Quarterly
American Political Science Review
American Sociological Review
Law and Social Inquiry
Law and Society Review
Judicature
American Journal of Political Science
Judicature
Jurimetrics Journal
Journal of Politics
Journal of the Public Law
Justice System Journal
Political Research Quarterly
Social Forces
Social Science Review

Law Reviews are also appropriate. Internet sources ARE NOT appropriate sources.