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:


Students must obtain and register a clicker for the course.

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 some combination of multiple choice, 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 must adhere to the Code of Student Conduct.

Students will also be required to complete a 10-12 page research paper (3,250 word minimum) posted in Word to Moodle. 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. Scholarly research monographs (NOT textbooks) are also acceptable. Students may use material from the textbooks in class, but these DO NOT count as additional sources. Students must post their topic on Moodle by 11:55PM Tuesday, February 4 (5 points), the four additional sources must be posted by 11:55PM Tuesday, February 11 (5 points), and the introductory section must be posted by 11:55PM Thursday, February 26 (5 points). An initial draft of the research paper.
must be posted by 11:55PM **Thursday, April 10 (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 1 (80 points)**. Students who turn in the Topic, Sources, and/or Draft late will receive no credit. Late papers 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**. Clickers will be used to assess attendance, but attendance is not the only consideration. Participation is based on regular and punctual attendance, preparation and participation (including pop quizzes if necessary). 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 14-16</td>
<td>Introduction/Overview</td>
<td>Baum, <em>American Courts</em>, Chapter 1</td>
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<td>January 21-23</td>
<td>Court Organization</td>
<td>Baum, <em>American Courts</em>, Chapter 2</td>
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<td>January 28-February 2</td>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>Baum, <em>American Courts</em>, Chapter 3; Tamanaha, Chapters 8, 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 4</td>
<td>RESEARCH TOPIC DUE</td>
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<td>February 4-6</td>
<td>Selection of Judges</td>
<td>Baum, <em>American Courts</em>, Chapter 4</td>
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<td>February 11</td>
<td>ADDITIONAL SOURCES DUE</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 20-March 11</td>
<td>Criminal Trial Courts</td>
<td>Baum, <em>American Courts</em>, Chapter 6</td>
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<td>February 26</td>
<td>INTRODUCTORY SECTION DUE</td>
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<td>March 4</td>
<td>MARDI GRAS HOLIDAY</td>
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<td>March 13</td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAMINATION</td>
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<td>March 18-April 3</td>
<td>Civil Trial Courts</td>
<td>Baum, <em>American Courts</em>, Chapter 7</td>
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<td>April 8-10</td>
<td>Appellate Courts</td>
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<td>April 10</td>
<td>DRAFT RESEARCH PAPER DUE</td>
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<td>April 14-18</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK HOLIDAY</td>
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<td>April 22-24</td>
<td>Supreme Court</td>
<td>Baum, <em>Supreme Court</em>, Chapters 1-3</td>
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<td>May 1</td>
<td>RESEARCH PAPERS DUE</td>
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<td>April 29 – May 1</td>
<td>Supreme Court</td>
<td>Baum, <em>Supreme Court</em>, Chapters 4-6</td>
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<td>May 6</td>
<td>FINAL EXAM – 7:30am</td>
<td>Baum, <em>American Courts</em>, Chapter 9</td>
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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.)
