POS335 – The American Supreme Court

Syllabus - Spring 2008

Class meets Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:15-2:35 in Chemistry 151

Instructor: Udi Sommer
Email: esommer@albany.com
Office Hours: Tuesday 11-1

Course Description
This course will examine the U.S. Supreme Court through both text and cases. The topics include – the evolution of the judiciary and its effects on the other branches of government, the influence of the Court on the incorporation of civil liberties, internal institutions of the Court and models of judicial decision-making, and issues around judicial appointments. The course goals are to improve students understanding of how the Court functions, and to develop critical analytical skills concerning prevalent claims about the Supreme Court.

Attendance, Reading and Participation
Class attendance is very important. Students are not only expected to attend class, but to have read all assigned readings for that day. Quality participation also will contribute positively to your grade. If you miss class you are responsible for getting the material covered.

Exams
1. This course will have two mid-term exams on Thursday, February 28, and on Thursday, April 10.
2. There will be 3 to 4 online assignments
3. There will be a final examination. Place and time TBA. This will be a cumulative examination covering all the material in the course.
4. We will have about 6 unannounced quizzes during the semester.
5. Opportunities to earn extra credit by participating in political science research projects might be available during the semester.
Access to Blackboard (used to be WebCT)
You can access class information on Blackboard through your MyUAlbany account. Class syllabus and calendar are available on the course site. In addition, some of the assignments and exams will also be made available there. Log on to use helpful internet links and other useful information online.

Assistance
If you are having any difficulties with the course material or assignments, I encourage you to come and talk to me. I will be available by appointment. Also, if you are not facing any problems but would like to talk about the course, please feel free to come talk to me.

Grade Formula
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (total)</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterms (total)</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online assignments (total)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Presentation</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation/Attendance</td>
<td>4%</td>
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Required Texts
(available from campus bookstore located at 215 Western Avenue (465.2238) or from University at Albany Bookstore, Barnes and Noble (442.5698)):


Additional reading materials will include Supreme Court cases and journal articles. All are available online.

Useful websites
- Jstor - http://www.jstor.org/
- Findlaw - http://findlaw.com/
- The Supreme Court Official Website - http://www.supremecourtus.gov/
- http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/currentawareness/ussupremes.php
- The Oyez Project - http://www.oyez.org/
- On the Docket, Northwestern University - http://docket.medill.northwestern.edu/
COURSE OUTLINE
(Note: Supplementary readings are listed in the required textbook. You should take a look at these lists and pick books to read on topics that might interest you.)

Week 1 (January 24): Syllabus distribution, Introduction, and Assignments

Week 2 (January 29, 31): The Founding and Judicial Review
Readings: Marbury v. Madison; McCordle; McCloskey Ch. 1
Federalist Paper #78; The US Constitution (Articles I & III);

Week 3 (February 5, 7): The Court’s History – Class Presentations and Discussion
Readings: Baum, Chapter 1; McCloskey Chapters 2-4, 7, 8

1st ONLINE ASSIGNMENT – February 7 (Biographies of sitting Justices)

Week 4 (February 12, 14): The Court’s History – Class Presentations and Discussion
Readings: same as for Week 3

Week 5 (February 19, 21): Internal Institutions of the Court; Judicial Decision Making Models
Readings: Baum Chapter 4; SCAMR Chapters 2, 3, 7, 8, 9 & pp. 97-110

February 19 - No Class – President’s Day

Week 6 (February 26, 28): Internal Institutions of the Court; Judicial Decision Making Models
Readings: same as for Week 5

1st MIDTERM EXAM – tentatively set for February 28

Week 7 (March 4, 6): Judicial Decision Making Models
Readings: same as for Week 5

Week 8 (March 11, 13): Judicial Appointments
Readings: Baum Chapter 2

2nd ONLINE ASSIGNMENT – March 13 (The shift from Watkins to Barenblatt)

Week 9 (March 18, 20): Judicial Appointments; The Legislature and the Executive
Readings: Baum Chapter 2; McCulloch v. Maryland; Bush v. Gore;
In re Neagle; US v. Nixon; US v. Curtis-Wright Export

March 20 - No Class – Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting

Week 10 (March 25, 27): Classes suspended – Spring Break

Week 11 (April 1, 3): 1st Amendment – Freedom of the Press – Class Simulation

April 3 - No Class – Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting

Week 12 (April 8, 10): The Legislature and the Executive; Incorporating the Bill of Rights
Readings: Barron v. Baltimore; Hurtado v. California;
Palko v. Connecticut; Duncan v. Louisiana

2nd MIDTERM EXAM – tentatively set for April 10

Week 13 (April 15, 17): 1st Amendment – Religion Establishment and Exercise
Readings: Cantwell v. Connecticut; Sherbert v. Verner;
Wisconsin v. Yoder; Lemon v. Kurtzman; Agostini v. Felton
Employment Division, Department of Human Resources of
Oregon v. Smith; City of Boerne v. Flores

Week 14 (April 22, 24): 1st Amendment; Protection of the criminally accused
Readings: Mapp v. Ohio; Wolf v. Colorado; US v. Leon;
Escobedo v. Illinois; Miranda v. Arizona

3rd ONLINE ASSIGNMENT – April 24 (Qualifications Clauses)

Week 15 (April 29, May 1): Evidence from Justices’ private papers; Conclusions

Week 16 (May 6): Conclusions
Final Exam - TBA