LAW AND POLICY
RPOS/RPUB328
Syllabus

Professor: Ann Johnson

Phone: 518-442-5263

Email: ajohnson8@albany.edu

Office: Milne 203

Location: CH151

Course Times: Tues. and Thurs. 1:15-2:35

Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs. and by appointment

Course Description:
The law is a system of rules and procedures designed for the common good of a particular nation or society. The stability of our democracy is largely due to our collective faith in the structure of the U.S. legal system and its ability to function fairly. To fully comprehend how the system operates, understanding how the judges make their decisions is crucial. However, which cases are chosen by the Supreme Court and how laws are interpreted greatly affects public policy. It is also important to understand how other government and nongovernment actors interact with the court system. In this class you will learn about the origins of the U.S. Supreme Court as a separate branch and read milestone cases that established many of the policies that we currently have. You will reflect on journal articles debating the role of the court and other branches of government and the effect of the court on public policy. Finally, you will write a research paper demonstrating how law and public policy have interacted for a particular issue.

Course objectives:

In this course you will:

- Discuss the relationship between statutes and case law.
- Gain and practice legal reasoning and analysis skills.
- Evaluate public opinion and the role of the court.
- Analyze the power relationship between the governmental branches.
- Identify stakeholders and power players who may invest time and resources in shaping public policy.
- Assess the strength of legal arguments in cases by recognizing and analyzing how case precedent was used and applied to the facts of the case.
- Investigate the effect of influential members of the Supreme Court.

**Course Materials:**

**Journal Articles Available on JSTOR and Blackboard**


*Available at UA Bookstore or amazon.com*

**Instructional Approaches:**

Instruction in this course will involve a combination of Socratic Method, class discussion and debate based on the readings, and relevant materials. These approaches are designed to support the learning goals by having students go through the process of examining policies that have occurred through many dimensions, employing legal and social science analysis to articulate arguments and identify ways in which judges’ judicial philosophies and ideology as well as politics and outside actors may influence the result of a decision.

**Assignments:**

Students are given a choice of four reaction papers to articles assigned during the semester. These articles are meant to be challenging reading and prepare students as they move on in their education. Students will become familiar with the use library databases resources to retrieve these articles in preparation for the research paper. The term paper is to be 10-15 pages with legal and APA citations (see below) and is to be on a law and policy topic of the student’s choice. The paper will allow students to apply knowledge from broad topics to specific sets of examples in order to reinforce knowledge of the material and to incrementally practice analytical skills. Both the assignments and the final paper must use
correct citations. The term paper must reference the articles 12 times to be acceptable. General reading quizzes will be given to ensure student understanding of the material.

**Late Work Policy:**

Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Each day an assignment is late there is a 10% reduction in the grade. After five days the assignment will no longer be accepted.

**Accessing cases and laws:**
You can easily access all court cases and state and federal laws discussed in class and in the final assignment. These are available in their full format from Lexis-Nexis. Go to *University Library*, then to *Database Finder*, then the letter “L”, then choose *Lexis-Nexis academic universe*. In *Lexis-Nexis*, select *Law*. In *Law*, you will find the necessary links. To find a case, simply type the name or citation into the appropriate dialog box. All articles and cases have their full citation listed in this syllabus. Recent law review articles can also be accessed with *Lexis* or *Westlaw*.

**Accessing some articles:**
In addition to the version on Blackboard, you can easily access many of the articles discussed in class. These are available in their full format from JSTOR. Go to *University Library*, then to *Database Finder*, then the letter “J”, then choose *JSTOR*. In *JSTOR*, it is best to select journals from the fields of Political Science and Sociology. Recent law review articles can also be accessed with *Lexis* or *Westlaw*.

**Examples of Correct In-Text Citations:**

**Legal Citations:**
On May 20, 1974, the Court of Appeals of Washington (Division One) in *Singer v Hara* (11 Wn. App. 247 at 264) “concluded that the state's denial of a marriage license to [same sex] appellants is required by our state statutes and permitted by both the state and federal constitutions.” While state courts in Minnesota (in *Baker v. Nelson* 191 N.W.2d 185), New York (in *Anonymous v. Anonymous* 67 Misc. 2d 982, and later in *Kenney v Kenney* 76 Misc 2d 927), and Kentucky (in *Jones v. Hallahan* 501 S.W.2d 588) had previously issued opinions that denied marriage to lesbian and gay couples, the legal claim in *Singer v Hara* was the first of the challenges to state policies that prohibited same sex marriage to rely primarily on state constitutional provisions rather than rights associated with the US Constitution.

**Academic Citations:**
As Scheingold (1998, 124) notes “according to some critics of left-activist cause lawyering, legal challenges to the foundations of established authority are counter-productive as well as ineffectual.” …… Through the use of law, the state protects certain social, political, and economic configurations (Abel 1998) or, in this case, a certain sexual configuration.
Assessment / Grading:

Points and Percentages:

Reactions to Articles 40%
Participation 10%
Reading Quizzes 10%
Policy Paper 40%

Academic Conduct:

All work turned in is expected to be your own work. Students must follow the Academic Code of Conduct. Any violation of this standard will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

ADA Statement:

If you have a need for disability-related accommodations or services, please inform me or the coordinator of the Disabilities Resource Center. Reasonable and effective accommodations and services will be provided to students if requests are made in a timely manner, with appropriate documentation, in accordance with university guidelines.

Cell Phone Policy:

Please turn off your cell phone while in class. If you have extenuating circumstances, inform me prior to class, put the phone on silent (not vibrate) and refrain from texting. This will allow you and the other students to focus on what is occurring in the class. It will afford everyone a break from the outside world and an opportunity to connect with and learn from the professor and each other.

Attendance:

This class requires student attendance. Students may miss three classes without a medical excuse. Any classes missed after those three may result in a decrease in participation grades.

Course Schedule:

(The course schedule is subject to change as necessary).

8/28
Introduction and syllabus
8/30
Housing Law and Policy Presentation

9/4

9/6

9/11
Graber, Mark “Assessing Juristocracy: Are Judges Rulers or Agents?” 65 Maryland Law Review 100

9/13

9/18
NO CLASS

9/20


9/25
TBA

9/27
Reaction 1 Due

“The Supreme Court and Congress: Reconsidering the Relationship”(Making Policy Making Law 107-122)

10/2
Who Determines Policy

10/4
Class Exercise

10/9

10/11
Interest Groups


10/16

10/18
Reaction 2 Due

Excerpts Documentary “This Movie is Not Yet Rated”

10/23


Gerald Rosenberg, The Hollow Hope - chapters on same sex marriage (Excerpts).

10/25
Advocacy Litigation


Class Exercise
10/30
**Reaction 3 Due**

11/1
Hot Coffee Documentary

11/6
**Judicial Strategies and Policy**

11/8
**Reaction Paper 3**

**Public Opinion**

11/13

11/15

11/22
**Classes suspended**
THANKSGIVING

11/27
**Reaction 4 due**

**Debate of Class and Legal Rights and Policy**
11/29

**Paper Outline Due**


Paper Conferences

12/4
Paper Conferences

12/6
Paper Conferences

12/11
Discussion and Evaluations

**Exam Week:** Final Paper due in Political Science Contact Office (Humanities B16) by 2 pm