RPOS 330: Law, Courts, and Politics—Fall 2013

Scott Lemieux, Ph.D.
Office: Humanities 16
Office Hours: 4:40-5:40 TH or by appt.
Email: slemieux02@gmail.com

Required Texts:

Lawrence Baum, *The Supreme Court* (12th ed.), CQ Press
Michael Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, Oxford University Press
Ron Kahn and Kersch, eds., *The Supreme Court and American Political Development*, University Press of Kansas
Helena Silverstein, *Girls on the Stand*, NYU Press

All texts are available at the SUNY bookstore, as well as all major online booksellers.

Course Description and Objectives

Objectives
This course introduces students to the political role of U.S. state and federal courts, court organization, staffing, financing, judicial policy making, and the public perception of judicial process. Students in this class will be introduced to the current political issues concerning judicial institutions and legal research techniques. Additionally, this class emphasizes written and oral communication skills.

Course Requirements

Academic Honesty
All students are expected to abide by the University’s Code of Student Conduct [http://www.albany.edu/studentconduct/introduction.php](http://www.albany.edu/studentconduct/introduction.php). Any student caught plagiarizing work or cheating on an exam will be reported to the appropriate university officials.

Make-up Exam and Late Work Policy
Make-up exams will only be given to and late work accepted from students who notify the instructor within 24 hours of missing the exam/assignment and whose absence qualifies under U Albany policy. [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduateeducation/attendance.php](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduateeducation/attendance.php)

Assigned Readings and Reading Quizzes
Because the study of law requires both heavy reading and cumulative comprehension, it is essential that students read all assigned materials prior to each class. Reading assignments available on Blackboard are designated with a “B.” Additionally, quizzes will be randomly given during the semester. Quizzes are open note (but not open book) and intended to help students identify deficiencies in their notes and prepare for exams. There will be no make-ups, but the lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester. Participation in in-class activities will also count toward quiz grades.
Participation
Students are expected to attend class daily, on time, and for the duration of the class. Students are also expected to read all assigned readings before class, complete all written assignments on time, and treat classmates and the instructor with respect. Please turn off phones and put iPods, newspapers, and other unrelated materials away before class begins.

Exams
In-class discussions and the material assigned on the syllabus will provide the basis for exams. There will be two take-home exams to test your understanding of concepts as well as your ability to apply and analyze them. You will be able to submit exams electronically through the class’s BlackBoard page.

Grading Policy
Grades will be determined as follows:

30% Class participation/reading quizzes
70% Exams. Each exam will be non-cumulative and weighted equally.

Special Accommodation
Students with documented disabilities who require special testing accommodations should notify the instructor at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Course Outline

I. Introduction
Jan. 24: Class introduction

II. The Judicial System, the Selection of Justices, and the Relationship Between the Courts and Other Political Branches
Feb. 2-16: Baum, ch. 1-3; Kahn and Kersch ch. 3-4; plus additional texts

III. Judicial Decision-Making
Feb. 21-Mar. 7 Baum ch.4; Kahn and Kersch ch.2; plus additional classes. FIRST MIDTERM DISTRIBUTED MARCH 2; REVIEW SESSION MARCH 7.
CLASS CANCELLED MARCH 9. TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE MARCH 9 BY 6PM, SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY THROUGH BLACKBOARD

IV. Law and Social Change

Mar. 21-Apr. 4 Klarman (complete book), Kahn and Kersch ch. 8-9; plus additional texts

CLASS CANCELLED APRIL 6

V. Law on the Ground

Apr. 13-May 4 Silverstein (complete book), plus additional texts

MAY 9: REVIEW AND FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED

TAKE HOME EXAM DUE MAY 16 AT 6PM, SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY THROUGH BLACKBOARD