POS 4284 – Spring, 2012

Judicial Process and Politics
Tuesday and Thursday: 9:00-10:15 A.M.

Instructor: Quan Li
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Office Hours: T, Th 1:00-3:00 P.M., or by appointment

"The prophecies of what the courts will do in fact…are what I mean by the law."
Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (1841-1935)

Introduction

The purpose of this class is to help you develop an empirical understanding of judicial process and politics with a theoretical perspective. We will discuss a broad range of issues including the U.S. Constitution, its interpretation, politics in the judicial system, and the evolution of the legal profession.

Required Text

Baum, Lawrence. 2007 *American Courts: Process and Policy*. 6th ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Dahl, Robert. 2003. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press.

O'Brien, David M. 2011. *Storm Center*. 9th ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Inc.

Class Rules and Regulations

Attendance Policy

Attendance is not mandatory for this class. When you come to class I expect you to at least appear to be paying attention. There will be no reading the newspaper, magazines or other material, listening to a CD player or talking to other students. All material, other than the class material, should be out of sight when class starts and all personal conversations will stop. I will ask you to leave if you cannot follow the rules.

Examinations and Homework

In-Class Exams

There will be 2 in-class exams for this course, including the final exam. They may contain multiple choice and short answer questions. I will provide further details when we approach the first exam.

Make-up exams will ONLY be given for EXCUSED ABSENCE. If the absence occurs the same day as a scheduled exam or other graded procedure, you need to notify me or the department by the end of the FIRST WORKING DAY of your return to ensure full rights. You are responsible for providing satisfactory evidence to me within ONE WEEK of your return to substantiate the reason for the absence. I do not accept photocopies of documents. All make-up exams must be completed by the end of the SECOND WORKING DAY of your return. I may give entirely essay exams as necessary.

Writing Assignments

Over the course of the semester you are required to write 13 weekly essays for materials covered in each week. Each essay is one to two pages long and summaries your understanding of assigned reading material. They should be submitted before class discussion. Grading of the essays is based on completion, and each essay is worth 2 points.

Academic Dishonesty

Students who plagiarize or cheat will receive an "F." A clear definition of academic dishonesty and university procedures for responding to such misconduct can be found in the Golden Rule (see http://www.osc.sdes.ucf.edu/).

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Copyright

The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By "handouts," I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, power-point, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy or distribute the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission.

Controversial Content

Please be advised that some of the class material is controversial and may be offensive to you. If you do not feel comfortable with this, please let me know beforehand and I will make reasonable accommodations.

Extra Credit

You can earn extra credit by writing up to **3** additional legal briefs covering the Supreme Court decisions from its 2010 term. For each additional brief, you can get **1** extra point for your final grade.

DO NOT COPY LEGAL BRIEFS FROM YOUR CLASSMATES. THAT IS CHEATING!

Grading Criteria

Your final course grade will consist of four components:

Essay	60%
First Exam	15%
Second Exam	25%

Letter grades assigned at final time will reflect the following numeric grades:

Numerical Grade	*University Standard*	*Letter Grade*
89.5-100	Excellent	A
79.5-89.4	Good	B
69.5-79.4	Satisfactory	C
59.5-69.4	Passing	D
Below 59.4	Failing	F

Calculation of the final course grade will use the following procedure:

Grade of homework	*x .60*	= weighted grade
Grade of first exam	*x .15*	= weighted grade
Grade of second exam	*x .25*	= weighted grade
Preliminary course grade		= total of weighted grades

Adjustment for extra credit

Final Course Grade = Preliminary grade after adjustment

Grade Distribution

Grades for this class are available only through Webcourses. For instruction of accessing Webcourses, see https://myucfgrades.ucf.edu/help/.

DO NOT NEGOTIATE YOUR GRADES. If you are concerned about your grades after the first exam, schedule an appointment with me immediately following the first exam-not a week before the final exam. I may be able to help you to do better for the rest of the class. Remember, the longer you wait, the less I can do to help you.

Disclaimer

This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion when necessary.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

I expect reading assignments to be completed before the class in which they will be discussed.

Week 1

Course Introduction

Week 2

Baum, Chapter 1 and 2
Dahl, Chapter 1 and 2

Week 3

Dahl, Chapter 3 and 4
Dahl, Chapter 5 and 6

Week 4

Dahl, Chapter 7 and 8
Baum, Chapter 3

Week 5

O'Brien, Chapter 1
Baum, Chapter 4

Week 6

O'Brien, Chapter 2

Baum, Chapter 5

Week 7

First Exam
Baum, Chapter 6

Week 8

Baum, Chapter 7
O'Brien, Chapter 3

Week 9

Spring Break

Week 10

Baum, Chapter 8

Week 11

O'Brien, Chapter 4

Week 12

O'Brien, Chapter 5

Week 13

Baum, Chapter 9

Week 14

O'Brien, Chapter 6

Final Exam

University Schedule