

Introduction to POLI 212 Law and Legal Systems

Welcome to POLI 212 Law and Legal Systems Online. This course is 100% online and administered through UWSP's CANVAS online course program.

This course investigates law and legal systems in the United States, and focuses on *what the law is, how it is organized, and how it works*. Since this course is an introductory course, we take a broad look at the substance and content of law and the basic legal institutions and actors in the legal system. The goal of this course is to give you a good introduction to the many—and diverse—roles, functions, organization, and areas of the law, so as to help you decide whether you want to pursue further study or not.

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of this course, you should have a basic understanding of the various components of the U.S. legal system. You should be able to explain and appreciate:

- the roles and interactions of institutions and persons involved in the judicial process;
- the procedures, processes, and some of the constitutional and legal protections involved in trials and sentencing;
- the roles, purposes, and jurisdictions of various types of courts;
- how social science and empirical data help clarify the development, operation, and change of American law and legal institutions; and
- how the development of American law is affected by political, social, and economic forces.

COURSE ELEMENTS AND ONLINE INSTRUCTION:

Please note two very important points:

1. **There are NO regularly scheduled ZOOM lectures or discussions.**
2. **I will regularly communicate with students in the class via UWSP e-mail. Any changes to the course will be announced by e-mail and an announcement will be posted in Canvas. You will need to check your UWSP e-mail account a regular basis.**

The course is designed to be 100% online and asynchronous. There are no regularly scheduled lectures that you must attend at set times. While there are lectures that you need to view each week, the lectures are pre-recorded and you can view them at any time through Canvas.

The Advantages of online instruction: an online course has several advantages over face-to-face instruction. It offers a more *flexible* learning environment, especially for students who may not be able to regularly attend class. It allows students to *work at their own pace* in terms of completing the assigned readings and course requirements such as quizzes and essays. Students are also able to work *independently*.

Expectations: there are several expectations to the successful completion of this course, so please make sure that you note the following.

Computer Resource Expectations:

Students must have:

- Reliable access to the internet.
- Proficiency with word processing programs.
- Ability to download AND upload files in Microsoft Word and pdf (Adobe).
- Ability to log in to the UWSP library system to view videos in the library's Online Video Collection. In order to successfully complete the course your computer must have this capability.

Course Expectations:

Students should generally expect to:

- Access course resources in Canvas REGULARLY.
- Read the assigned readings and view recorded lectures in a timely manner.

Students *MUST* be prepared to:

- Adhere to all deadlines/due dates for exams and paper assignment. NO EXTENSIONS ON ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE GIVEN.
 - Upload assignments into the Canvas dropbox.
- Work independently on assigned readings and graded assignments.

The course is organized into specific modules. Each module is sequential, meaning that you are expected to complete the readings and assignments in each prior module before you progress to later modules. Modules are also grouped together according to content. Once you complete one group of modules and submit an exam, the next group of modules will open.

GRADING and ASSESSMENT: READ THIS SECTION CAREFULLY.

Grade Scale: Your course grade is based on a straight percentage scale. An A will be 93 or above, A- 90-92.99, B+ 87-89.99, B 83-86.99, B- 80-82.99, C+ 77-79.99, C 73-76.99, C- 70-72.99, D+ 67-69.99, D 60-66.99, F 59.99 and below.

There are **FOUR** graded assignments throughout the course: 3 exams (including the final exam) AND one paper. Your semester grade is determined by your performance on these four assignments. There are NO weekly reading quizzes or discussion sections. So, again, your final semester grade is based on the four graded assignments.

The grade percentage is as follows: Exam 1: 20%; Exam 2: 20%; Exam 3: 35%; Response paper: 25%

EXAMS

Exam 1 and Exam 2 are each worth 20% of your final grade. The final exam (Exam 3) at the end of the course is worth 35% of your final grade. The final exam is cumulative, and exams 1 and 2 will cover only the material up to that exam. All exams are essay questions, and are open-book which means you can use course materials to answer the questions. You should review the exam rubric to understand how the exams are graded. Each of the exams will open a few days before your essay is due in Canvas. Please note the specific opening and closing dates for the essay exams. You may view each exam prompt after it opens in Canvas, and then you have until the deadline to submit your paper. Thus, you should review the exam prompt, organize your paper and course materials, write and review drafts of your paper, and then submit it to Canvas.

Minimum Word Requirements: Each writing assignment has a minimum word count. Assignments that do not meet the minimum word requirement will be penalized UP TO 20% of the grade received on that assignment.

Essay Exam #1: 500 words minimum

Essay Exam #2: 500 words minimum

Final Exam: 1 essay question, 500 words minimum

Each essay opens and closes at specific times. **Exams will NOT be opened early or closed later, so make sure you plan accordingly to submit each exam online during the specified time.**

Exam 1: Exam prompt opens Saturday October 2 and closes SATURDAY OCTOBER 9 AT 11:59PM.

Exam 2: Exam prompt opens on Saturday October 31 and closes SATURDAY NOVEMBER 6 AT 11:59PM.

Final Exam: Exam prompt opens on Saturday December 11th at 8am and closes on THURSDAY December 16th at 11:59pm.

RESPONSE PAPER

The response paper is a minimum of 750 words.

You will write ONE paper in the course in which you respond to a specific prompt. The paper is NOT a research paper. You are to review materials provided in Canvas and respond to them guided by the specific prompt. **You only have to write ONE response paper for the course** but

you may write more than one, in which case your highest score will count for this grade category. For example, if you write a response paper earlier in the course and want to improve your grade you may submit another paper. The highest grade among your submissions will be counted.

There are 8 response paper assignments that you can choose from. **Again, you only have to submit ONE.**

The response paper opening and due dates are spread throughout the semester so be sure to check the specific topic and dates on the master list of papers. Paper assignments will NOT be opened earlier or closed later.

The requirements for each response paper: your essay must be well organized, well-written response to the specific question posed. Points will be deducted for grammar and spelling mistakes. Your paper must be at least 750 words (approximately 3-4 pages) and uploaded to the appropriate Canvas dropbox in a Microsoft Word OR pdf document. Only those file formats will be accepted.

Papers e-mailed to me will not be graded.

Failure to write the minimum word number can result in up to a 20% reduction in the paper grade. Plagiarism will result in a 0 for the assignment.

The response papers are linked to specific modules. The papers have different opening and closing/due dates throughout the semester.

Grading Rubrics

There is a grade rubric attached to each assignment and it is visible to you when you open that assignment. It defines the criteria that your assignment grade is based on.

Plagiarism and Use of Outside Materials

You are prohibited from using outside materials for your exam essays and response paper. You may not reference websites, or cut and paste materials from outside sources, unless those sources are specifically included as materials in this course. All written work in this class is scanned for plagiarism by Turnitin.com. Any plagiarism on an assignment will result in a 0 grade for that assignment. This also includes self-plagiarism in which you submit a paper written for another course for an assignment in this course. All of your written work in this course must be unique to this course only. Note that plagiarism cases may also be referred to the UWSP Dean of Students for further academic misconduct proceedings. The Turnitin report will be available to you after you have submitted your work to Canvas.

MATERIALS FOR THE COURSE:

There is a text rental for the course, available through the UWSP bookstore: The Judicial Process: Law, Courts, and Judicial Politics, 2nd ed., by Christopher P. Banks and David M. O'Brien. (West Academic Press, 2021). Reading assignments, including specific page numbers in

some cases, are listed in each module. The reading is required and your essay exams are graded in part based on how you incorporate the assigned readings into your answers.

There are other assigned readings in Canvas, as well as assigned videos that you must view through the UWSP Library.

MODULAR STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE:

The course is organized by specific modules. Each module covers a particular set of legal institutions, actors, or areas of the law.

Each module will list the following materials, if used: readings from the textrental; other assigned readings; video lectures; UWSP Library videos.

Not all modules will use readings from the textrental. Some modules will have materials available to you in Canvas, and you are expected to read them.

Not all modules have video lectures. When a module does have a video lecture you will be able to view it in Canvas.

Some modules require you to view videos through the UWSP Library. To do so, you **MUST** log in to the library system and then the video will be available.

POLI 212 Law and Legal Systems
Fall 2021
ONLINE

Modules and Exams

This document is an overview of the reading assignments and exam schedule for the Fall 2021 semester. Be sure to consult each specific module for more details.

Once a module is unlocked, it will remain unlocked for the rest of the semester. Note that modules unlock in groups too.

The reading assignments are listed under each module in Canvas and are also provided here. Most of the reading selections are from the textrental and are labeled “textrental.” Other selections are available in Canvas in pdf form. All readings listed are required unless otherwise noted in a specific module in Canvas.

The following modules will unlock on September 2:

September 2-10	Module 1: The Politics of Law and Courts in Society Reading: Textrental Chapter 1. Video Lecture.
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- September 13-17** **Module 2: The Politics of Law and Jurisprudence**
Reading: Textrental, Chapter 2.
Video Lecture.
- September 20-24** **Module 3: Federal Courts**
Reading: Selections in CANVAS Module on Federal Courts.
Video Lecture.
- September 27-October 1** **Module 4: State Courts**
Reading: Textrental pages 103-115 AND Selections in CANVAS.
Module on State Courts.
Video Lecture.

October 4-8 **Essay Exam #1**
Exam #1 will cover the materials from Modules 1-4.
Exam prompt opens Saturday October 2 and closes SATURDAY OCTOBER 9
AT 11:59PM.

**EXAM DUE IN CANVAS NO LATER THAN
SATURDAY OCTOBER 9 11:59PM.**

The following modules will unlock on October 9:

- October 11-15** **Module 5: Judges.**
Reading: Textrental, Chapter 4: pages 147-170; 196-208.
Video lecture.
- October 18-22** **Module 6: Lawyers and the Legal Profession**
Reading: Textrental, Chapter 5: pages 225-274.Oc
Video lecture.
- October 25-29** **Module 7: Courtroom Workgroup**
Reading: selection from the casebook American Courts; reading is in Canvas and
NOT in the textrental.
Video lecture.
- November 1-5** **Exam #2.**
Exam #2 will cover materials from Modules 5-7. Exam prompt opens on
Saturday October 30 and closes SATURDAY NOVEMBER 6 AT 11:59PM.
**EXAM #2 DUE IN CANVAS NO LATER
THAN SATURDAY NOVEMBER 6 11:59PM.**

The following modules will unlock on November 6:

- November 8-12** **Module 8: Criminal Trials**
Reading: Textrental, pages 323-345.
Video lecture.
- November 15-19** **Module 9: Sentencing**
Reading: Textrental, pages 355-364.
Video lecture.
- November 22-26** **Module 10: Plea Bargaining**
There is NO assigned reading for this module. Instead you will watch a documentary on plea-bargaining. Consult Module 10 for instructions.
- November 29-December 3** **Module 11: Civil Trials**
Reading: Textrental, Chapter 8.
Video lecture.
- December 6-10** **Module 12: Problem Solving Courts**
Reading: selected readings in Canvas.

Final Exam Period

The Final exam will consist of ONE essay question. It is an open book exam.

Final exam opens Saturday December 11 at 8am and closes THURSDAY DECEMBER 16 AT 11:59PM. NOTE THAT THE CLOSING DATE IS A THURSDAY, NOT A SATURDAY. DO NOT MISS THIS CLOSING DATE.