Introduction to POLI 212 Law and Legal Systems Spring 2024 ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS

Prof. John Blakeman

UWSP Political Science

Welcome to POLI 212 Law and Legal Systems Online, for the Spring 2024 semester. 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:

The course is designed to be 100% online and asynchronous. That means you can view the lectures and complete the assigned readings at times that are more convenient for you. 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.

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 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 expect to:

- Access course resources in Canvas REGULARLY.
- Read the assigned readings and view recorded lectures in a timely manner.
- Complete the weekly reading quizzes on time.
- Complete the scheduled essay exams on time.

Students *MUST* be prepared to:

- Adhere to all deadlines/due dates for exams and weekly quizzes.
- 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 the assignment group consisting of several short reading quizzes throughout the semester. Your semester grade is determined by your performance on these four assignments. There are NO weekly 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%
Reading quizzes: 25%

EXAMS

Exam 1 and Exam 2 are each worth 20% of your final grade. Exam #3 at the end of the course is worth 35% of your final grade. 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. You will have 7 days in which to work on your essay and submit it to Canvas.

Closing times for all exams is 11:59pm on the scheduled day. You should plan to upload your exam with plenty of time to spare since after the 11:59pm deadline the exam is considered late. There is a 24hr grace period during which you may submit a late exam. Late exams will receive a 10% grade penalty. Exams after the 24hr grace period deadline will not be accepted. Exceptions might be made for students with official university excuses, and must be accompanied by appropriate documentation and the request made in a timely manner.

Reading Quizzes

Each module has a reading quiz. You MUST complete all of the reading quizzes. However, only your 6 highest quiz scores will count towards your final grade.

The reading quizzes:

-provide a continual assessment of your knowledge during the course;

-cover the reading assigned for each specifc module;

-provide feedback to you on your reading comprehension and understanding of each module.

Each quiz:

-40 minute time length

-One attempt only

-You MAY use the texrental and other assigned readings during the quiz.

Reading quizzes will be open for 7 days. You may access the quiz and take it at any point during that time. Quizzes will open on a Monday at 8am and close on the following Monday at 8am. There will be a 24 hr grace period during which you may take a quiz late. After that 24 hr period no quizzes will be reopened. Exceptions might be made for students with official university excuses, and must be accompanied by appropriate documentation and the request made in a timely manner. Again, the quizzes will be open for 7 days, so plan accordingly.

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 and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

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. The Turnitin program ALSO includes AI generated essays. All of your written work in this course must be unique to this course only, which means at minimum you should not try to submit work done in another course. Note that plagiarism cases may also be referred to the UWSP Dean of Students for further academic misconduct proceedings. The Turnitin report will be avaialable to you after you have submitted your work to Canvas and you are strongly encouraged to review the report. I'll be glad address any concerns or questions you might have.

MATERIALS FOR THE COURSE:

There is a textrental 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 numbes 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 modules 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.

Not all of the modules are open at the start of the semester. Modules will open throughout the semester in specific groupings. This is to ensure that you pace your progression through the course over the entire semester.

Office Hours and Contacting Prof. Blakeman

To get in touch with me, please use my UWSP e-mail: John.Blakeman@uwsp.edu

I do not have an office phone.

I will be holding IN-PERSON office hours for the Spring 2024 semester.

My office hours are: Tuesday and Thursday, 11am-1pm; and by appointment. E-mail to set up an appointment.

Office: SCI D337

Even though this course is 100% online, almost all of you (if not all of you) will be on campus regularly for other classes. Due to that I am not maintaining a regular Zoom office presence. However, if you're not on campus, then I will gladly schedule a Zoom meeting with you--just ask, and we'll find a time.

Course Communication

I will regularly communicate with you through your UWSP e-mail account. You will need to check your e-mail on a regular basis.

Master List of Modules Spring 2024

This master list of modules is intended to keep you on track with the course and working through the course materials at a relatively even pace. You might work slightly faster or slower through the materials, but that is up to you. However, you must adhere to the opening and closing dates for the essay exams and response papers. Modules that are listed after a specific essay exam will NOT open until after the deadline for that exam has passed.

Week of January 22: Module: The Politics of Law and Courts in Society

Week of January 29: Module : The Politics of Law and Jurisprudence

Week of February 5: Module : Federal Courts

Week of February 12 : Module: State Courts

Week of February 19 Essay Exam #1. Exam opens on February 17th at 12am and closes on February 25 at 11:59pm.

The following modules open March 3 12am.

Week of February 26: Module: Judges

Week of March 4: Module: The Legal Profession

Week of March 11: Module: The Courtroom Workgroup

Week of March 18: SPRING BREAK

Week of March 25: Module: Trial Courts--Criminal Justice

Week of April 1: Essay Exam #2. Exam opens on March 30 12am and closes on April 7 at 11:59pm.

The following modules open April 7.

Week of April 8: Module: Sentencing

Week of April 15: Module: Plea Bargaining

Week of April 22: Module: Trial Courts: Civil Justice

Week of April 29: Module: Problem Solving Courts and Restorative Justice

 Final Exam Essay opens May 8 at 12am and closes May 15 at 11:59pm.

Graded and Required Assignments

There are FOUR (4) graded and required assignments in POLI 212. Your final grade is calculated according to the following percentages:

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 20%

Exam 3: 35%

Reading Quizzes: 25%

You must complete ALL four of the assignments. Any uncompleted assignment will be scored as a "0".

For the reading quizzes you must complete ALL 11 of the quizzes. Missed quizzes will be scored as 0. Quizzes will NOT be reset. Your 5 LOWEST quiz scores will be dropped, and only your 6 HIGHEST scores will count towards the final grade.

Essay Exam Assignments

Essay exams

There will be 3 essay exams in this course. Two are scheduled during the regular semester and one during the final exam period. For each essay you will have several days in which to prepare, write, and submit your essay to Canvas. During the regular semester Essays #1 and #2 will each be scheduled during an

"essay week" in this course, which means there will be no scheduled reading assignments or video lectures during the essay week.

NOTE the essay schedule which is provided in master list of modules, and in the Canvas calendar.

Review the late submission policy here.

Review the course policy on plagiarism and the use of artificial intelligence here.

All essay answers must be your own work, and unique to this class, which means you cannot submit an essay that your have written for another class.

To do well on the essays, I suggest the following:

1. Take your time. View the exam prompt soon after it opens. Think about the question, organize your thoughts/answers, consult the assigned readings, write an answer, proof read that answer, then upload your document. Each exam takes place over a week, with no other readings or lectures for the class, so you'll have several days to work on each one. Use the time that's available to you.

2. Review the exam rubric so you know what's expected.

3. The exam questions ask you to apply and analyze concepts and address issues encountered in the readings.

4. Use the course materials--the textrental especially--to help with your answer. You are free to consult the book and other course materials as you work through each essay question.

5. Exam dropboxes will close promptly at 11:59pm on the day the exam is due. Do NOT wait until 11:58pm to upload your essay. Your clock may be off, you might encounter computer difficulties, etc. Upload your essay well before the deadline.

Reading Quizzes

All of the modules except Module 10 have a reading quiz attached. The reading quiz consists of a few questions such as multiple choice, true/false, and fill in the blank, that test you on the reading content. You should obviously do the reading first and then take the quiz.

The quizzes are open book. Have your book handy when you take each reading quiz. Some questions may ask you to refer to a table, or chart, or other information in the book. For other questions you may refer to the textrental or other readings for an answer.

Note the following:

-the points for each specific quiz may differ, but every quiz score will be converted to a 100% scale for the gradebook;

-you have 40 minutes in which to complete the quiz;

-you may take each quiz only once;

-each quiz will open on a Monday at 8am, and close the following Monday at 8am. Check the specific dates and times for each quiz in Canvas.

Here is the course policy on late quizzes.

There is a 24-hour grace period on quizzes. The due date will always be a Monday at 8am, but if you miss that due date you will have 24 hours in which to complete the quiz.

Turnitin.com and Plagiarism and Artificial Intelligence

All of your written work for POLI 212 Law and Legal Systems is scanned by TurnitIn for plagiarism AND use of Artificial Intelligence programs (such as ChatGPT, GoogleBard, and many others). You can review your TurnitIn report after you have submitted your essays. I strongly encourage you to review each Turnitin report and contact me with any questions you may have. You are allowed more than one submission up to the deadline so you can revise/resubmit your work after review of your TurnitIn report, as long as the Canvas dropbox is open.

In general, if your TurnitIn report is high, I will review your essay carefully to determine if it is plagiarized. To avoid plagiarism, you should cite references from the sources that you use. Note that TurnitIn will also view sources in quotation marks are potential plagiarism, leading to a high plagiarism score. However, when I review your essay I will see that you have used quotation marks to denote a specific quote from the textrental or other course materials, and I will not consider that plagiarism. So-- when writing your essays, be sure to accurately quote sources when needed, and always provide citations- -page numbers, for example, from the textbook.

As for Artificial Intelligence, you may not use AI for your essays. TurnitIn reports the percentage of your paper that is potentially created by AI. I will review that carefully, as should you. If your paper shows up as generated by Artificial Intelligence, I will assign that paper a grade of 0. If you consider the grade is an error, I am willing to chat with you and review your work and grade when needed.

Citation method--I do not require a specific citation method for your written work in this class. As long as I can tell what source your are citing, and the specific page number, I am fine. Feel free to use a citation method that you are comfortable with.

As long as you cite your sources back to the textbook you will be fine!

So--to repeat:

1. Review your Turnitin and AI scores after submitting your essay exams.

2. Papers that are reported as generated by Artificial Intelligence will recieve a grade of 0.

3. Contact me with any questions or concerns you have about your Turnitin or AI scores.

Questions, please ask.

Late Assignments--Read This Carefully

All assignments must be submitted to Canvas on time. If you try to upload an assignment after that the dropbox will be closed and it will not accept your submission. In general, if the dropbox does not allow your submission it is because it is closed. The dropbox is based on the Canvas clock too, not your own time.

GRACE PERIOD FOR WEEKLY QUIZZES

The quiz time frames are: quizzes open on a Monday at 8am, and close on the following Monday at 8am. There is a 24 hour grace period for the weekly reading quizzes. If you miss the regular deadline, you will

have another 24 hours in which to take the quiz. Your late quiz will automatically receive a 10% reduction in grade. After 24 hours beyond the due date, the quiz is closed and will not be reopened.

GRACE PERIOD FOR ESSAYS

The time frame for essays is different than for quizzes. Essays will open at 12am on a specific day, and will close at 11:59pm on the due date. There is a 24 hour grace period for essay assignments. If you miss the regular deadline, you will have another 24 hours in which to submit your essay. Your late essay will automatically receive a 10% reduction in grade. After 24 hours, no assignments will be accepted.

No essays will be accepted by e-mail.

If you experience health or other issues that interfere with the completion of an assignment I am willing to work with you to set an alternate submission date. HOWEVER, your excuse must be validated by the UWSP Dean of Student's Office, or other appropriate university office.