

Introduction to POLI 212 Law and Legal Systems Fall 2023

Welcome to POLI 212 Law and Legal Systems Online, for the FALL 2023 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. **Be sure to read the rules on submitting late assignments.**
 - 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. 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 Canvas will not accept exams/submissions AFTER 11:59pm on the scheduled closing day.**

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 specific 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 textural and other assigned readings during the quiz.

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. 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 available 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 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 text rental; other assigned readings; video lectures; UWSP Library videos.

Not all modules will use readings from the text rental. 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 (due to budget cuts...)

I will be holding IN-PERSON office hours for the Fall 2023 semester.

My office hours are: Tuesday and Thursday, 11am-1pm

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.

Master List of Modules Fall 2023

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 September 4: Module: The Politics of Law and Courts in Society](#)

[Week of September 11: Module : The Politics of Law and Jurisprudence](#)

[Week of September 18: Module : Federal Courts](#)

[Week of September 25 : Module: State Courts](#)

[Week of October 2: Essay Exam #1. Exam opens on September 30th at 12am and closes on October 8 at 11:59pm.](#)

The following modules open October 7 12am.

[Week of October 9: Module: Judges](#)

[Week of October 16 : Module: Lawyers](#)

[Week of October 23: Module: The Courtroom Workgroup](#)

[Week of October 30: Module: Trial Courts--Criminal Justice](#)

[Week of November 6 : Essay Exam #2. Exam opens on November 4 12am and closes on November 12 at 11:59pm.](#)

The following modules open November 11.

[Week of November 13: Module: Sentencing](#)

[Week of November 20: Module: Plea Bargaining](#)

[Week of : Module November 27: Trial Courts: Civil Justice](#)

[Week of December 4: Module: Problem Solving Courts and Restorative Justice](#)

[Final Exam Essay opens **December 13 at 12 am and closes December 20 at 11:59pm.**](#)