

# POLI 212 Law and Legal Systems ONLINE

## Spring 2021

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.

### **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 on a weekly basis at minimum, and perhaps on a daily basis when needed.
- Read the assigned readings 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, which is linked to the Turnitin plagiarism program.
- 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.

**EXAMS: 75% of total grade**

**RESPONSE PAPER: 25% of total grade**

## **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.

**You may NOT use any materials outside of the course** to answer the exam essays. You may not reference websites, or cut and paste materials from outside sources. 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 the following minimum word requirements for each exam/assignment below. 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: 2 essay questions, each is 500 words minimum, 1000 words total

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: Opens Saturday February 20 at 8am. Closes Thursday February 25 at 5pm. **NOTE THAT THE DUE DATE FOR THE ESSAY IS 5PM AND NOT MIDNIGHT.**

Exam 2: Opens Saturday April 3 at 8am. Closes Thursday April 8 at 5pm. **NOTE THAT THE DUE DATE FOR THE ESSAY IS 5PM AND NOT MIDNIGHT.**

Final Exam: The final exam will open Saturday May 15 at 8am and close Thursday May 20 at 5pm. **NOTE THAT THE DUE DATE FOR THE ESSAY IS 5PM AND NOT MIDNIGHT.**

## **RESPONSE PAPER**

The response paper is a minimum of 750 words. Failure to reach the minimum word count will result in a reduction of grade.

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, 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 complete 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.

## **MATERIALS FOR THE COURSE:**

There is a textrental for the course, available through the UWSP bookstore: G. Larry Mays, American Courts and the Judicial Process, Oxford University Press.

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.

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### **Modules and Exams**

**The reading assignments are listed under each module in Canvas and are also provided here. Some of the reading selections are from the textrental and other selections are available in Canvas in pdf form. All readings listed are required.**

<b>January 25-29</b>	<b>Module 1: Introduction to the Law and Legal Systems</b> Reading: Textrental Chapter 1 Video Lecture
<b>February 1-5</b>	<b>Module 2: Introduction to the Law</b> Reading: Textrental, Chapter 2 Video Lecture
<b>February 8-12</b>	<b>Module 3: Federal Courts</b> Reading: Selections in CANVAS Module on Federal Courts Video Lecture

**February 15-19**      **Module 4: State Courts**  
Reading: Textrental pages 278-293 AND Selections in CANVAS Module on State Courts  
Video Lecture

**February 22-25**      **Essay Exam #1**  
Exam #1 will cover the materials from Modules 1-4.  
Exam prompt opens Saturday February 20 8am  
**Due: Thursday, February 25 at 5pm.**

**Once you submit Essay #1, the following modules will unlock for you:**

**March 1-5**      **Module 5: Civil and Criminal Cases**  
Reading: Textrental, Pages: 36-41; 196-208;  
Video lecture

**March 8-12**      **Module 6: The Courtroom Work Group**  
Reading: Textrental Chapter 3  
Video Lecture

**March 15-19**      **Module 7: Judges**  
Reading: Textrental Chapter 4  
Video Lecture

**March 22**      **Spring Break**

**March 29-April 1**      **Module 8: Lawyers**  
Reading: Textrental, Chapter 5  
Video Lecture

**April 5-8**      **Essay Exam #2**  
Exam #2 will cover the materials from Modules 5-8  
Exam prompt will open Saturday April 3 at 8am  
**DUE: Thursday April 8 at 5pm.**

**Once you submit Essay #2, the following modules will unlock for you:**

**April 12-16**      **Module 9: Trials**  
View video on Trials available through UWSP Library; log-in required  
The video can be accessed through the Canvas module.

**April 19-23**      **Module 10: Sentencing**

Reading: Textrental, Chapter 8  
Video Lecture

**April 26-29**

**Module 11: Plea Bargaining**

Video through UWSP Library, log-in required. The video can be accessed through the Canvas module.

**May 3-7**

**Module 12: Restorative Justice and Problem Solving Courts**

View video on Drug Courts available through UWSP Library; log-in required. The video can be accessed through the Canvas module. Assigned readings are also in Canvas in pdf.

**May 10-14**

**Catch-up period**

**May 15-20**

**Final Exam Period**

**The Final exam will consist of TWO essay questions. One question will be cumulative, and the other question will be comprehensive. It is an open book exam.**

**Final exam opens Saturday May 15 at 8am and closes Thursday May 20 at 5pm.**