PSC 211: INTRODUCTION TO PRE-LAW
Stephen F. Austin State University
Department of Government
FALL 2019

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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COURSE INFORMATION

Course Number:
PSC 211

Section: 001

Prerequisites:
PSC 141 | PSC 142

Credit Hours: 3

Course Description: “Familiarizes students with pre-law topics such as legal career paths, law school admissions statistics, employment opportunities, tuition costs, areas of specialty and what skills to acquire to be successful in law school. Students will learn to distinguish different types of laws: the U.S. Constitution, federal and state law, case law, statutes, regulations, and treaties. Focuses on legal skill building: basic legal research, writing, how to brief a case (IRAC method).” General Bulletin, 2017-18, p.325

Class Meeting Days & Times: MW 1:00pm - 2:15pm
Room: T. E. Ferguson Liberal Arts 377

REQUIRED TEXTS


The Course

It is, emphatically, the province and duty of the judicial department, to say what the law is. Those who apply the rule to particular cases, must of necessity expound and interpret that rule."

Chief Justice John Marshall, Marbury v. Madison

Course Objectives

General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes:
This course is associated with the major, second major, and minor in the political science. The course is not part of the general education core curriculum. No specific general education objectives or outcomes are addressed in this course.

Course Commitment:
Introduction to Pre-Law" (3 credits) is an introductory course that requires approximately 150 minutes of classroom time/direct instruction weekly for 15 weeks, and also meets for a two-hour final examination. In addition, students spend at least six hours weekly out-of-class on work including reading, researching, writing, and studying. Students are required to complete mid-term and final exams. In addition, students must complete several major writing assignments, engage in classroom discussions, and take part in group projects.

Program Learning Outcomes:
This course is designed to provide an introduction to the Pre-Law program at the sophomore level. It serves as the foundational introductory course to the Pre-Law Concentration and Pre-Law Minor in the Department of Government's Political Science program.

Student Learning Outcomes:
By the end of the course, students will be able…

- To know the types of legal career paths available in the law profession
- Begin mastery of the skills necessary to be successful in law school
- To read and brief a case using the standard IRAC method
- To understand the process of applying to law school and writing personal statements
- To perform basic legal research
- To gain an understanding of the basics of the law and types of law

Classroom Policies

- Class attendance and participation is required. Students are expected to do all of the readings prior to the class day in which material has been assigned, to be on time for class, to respect the classroom and the instructor (no cellphones, tweeting, Facebooking, Snap-chatting, etc.). Students are expected to actively ask questions and participate in the class discussion of the assigned materials.

- Late assignments are severely penalized. Grades are non-negotiable.

- The open exchange of ideas will be respected by all students. Respectful discussion is required. While you are
allowed to express your opinions during the discussions remember that other students may have different opinions and have the right to have and express those opinions. Personal attacks are not allowed as they do not promote civilized debate (one of the main purposes of the required discussions).

**Evaluation**

1) **Law School Assignments.** Students will take the LSAT, identify potential letter of recommendation writers and potential law schools they would like to apply to:
   a. Take the LSAT (50 points). Students will take a practice LSAT in class. Students must complete all four sections and the essay question (Brightspace) in order to earn credit.
   b. Identify potential letter writers (25 points). Students will identify three possible letter of recommendation writers, and briefly discuss their relationship with the letter writer (2-5 sentences for each potential letter writer). Due on 16 September 2019.
   c. Identify potential law schools (25 points). Students will identify nine law schools they are interested in applying to when they go to law school. I will discuss more about this during the LSAT week. Due on 26 September 2019.

2) **Participation.** You are expected to attend class. Consistent class attendance, reading and preparation, and participation are essential to successfully completing the course.

3) **Papers.** Papers (200 points total). You will write three papers this semester (each paper is worth 20 points). If a paper is not turned in on time, your grade will suffer. That is, if you turn it in late, you will lose 4 points for the assignment for each day that it is late.
   a. **Personal Statement** (50 points). Papers must be 2-3 pages and must be brought to class on 17 September 2019 for peer review. If you do not bring one for the peer review day, you will automatically lose 3 points for the assignment. Final drafts will be due on 26 September 2019.
   b. **Constitutional Interpretation** (50 points). Papers must be 3-5 pages - due 28 October 2019.
   c. **Reaction Papers** (50 points). You will complete two reaction papers over the course of this semester to the films *The Paper Chase* and *My Cousin Vinny*. Reaction papers must have a strong thesis, develop main and supporting ideas, provide insight and analysis, relate the piece to relevant course topics, and conclude with a coherent assessment. Further details on the reaction paper substantive and format requirements will be provided later in the course. RP #1 is due on 7 October 2019. RP #2 is due on 18 November 2019.
   d. **Appellate Paper** (50 points). Papers must be 4-6 pages - due on Brightspace on 8 December 2019 by 11pm, paper copy due in class, final examination period.

4) **Case Briefs.** (100 points) You will submit case briefs on BRIGHTSPACE. You must write a one page brief for all cases assigned (10 cases), and you must submit your briefs on BRIGHTSPACE prior to the start of class. No exceptions. Briefing cases not only helps you learn the material, but provides the basis for your informed participation in class discussions and oral arguments. Briefs you turn in will be graded for grammar and accuracy. That is, I will peruse briefs to
make sure they correctly summarize the facts, legal question, and legal reasoning of the cases. When it comes to the briefs, you do not need to consult outside sources. If you copy and paste briefs from Oyez.com or another website, then you earn a zero for the legal briefs assignment. Moreover, I will inform the appropriate authorities about the situation.

4) **Oral Arguments.** (100 points) All students will be required to give an 8-10 minute oral argument in front of a panel of three to five judges and will be required to serve as a judge. The order of litigants will be chosen randomly. If your name is called and you refuse to deliver your argument, then you will automatically lose 5 percent on the assignment. If your name is called and you are absent, then you will lose 5 percent on the assignment (exceptions will be made for excused absences, but excused absences must be properly documented). Judges will be expected to ask a minimum of three relevant questions over the course of two oral arguments. If you ask no questions as a judge during an oral argument, you will be replaced by a fellow student who will. Moreover, if you choose not to participate in the oral arguments as a litigant or judge, you will not earn higher than a C for the course.

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**ATTENDANCE POLICIES**

- Students are expected to attend class. A strong correlation exists between attendance and student performance in the course. Thus, attendance is required for this course. Moreover, regular attendance makes a clear and distinct statement about personal responsibility; habits developed during a student’s career at SFA carry over to the post-university world of employment.

- During each class session, a sign-in sheet will be passed around. Each student is expected to sign for herself/himself only. Students who sign the attendance sheet for another student will receive a failing grade for the course, and result in an academic honesty case submitted to the Dean’s office.

- Class begins promptly at the time scheduled. Students are expected to be present for the entire class period. Late arrivals and early departures are not tolerated. Tardiness is distracting to fellow students in the class. If either late arrivals or early departures become a problem during the semester, the instructor will count as absent those students who fail to be on time and/or do not stay for the duration.

- Students should demonstrate common courtesy for their fellow students by turning off their cell phones before class begins. Students who receive and answer cell phone calls during class will be asked to leave the class. Mocking of student’s ring tone is left to the discretion of the instructor.
ACADEMIC HONESTY

The following is taken from SFASU’s Policy Manual (2016), section on “Academic Integrity” (A-9). Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp. All cases of academic dishonesty will be handled according to University policies and procedures (A-9.1). The consequences for academic dishonesty may range from a score of zero (0) on the assignment to an “F” for the course. For details, students should refer to the SFA Policy Manual (2016) or the University’s General Bulletin, 2016 – 2017 section entitled “Academic Integrity” and other sources of University policy.

WITHHELD GRADES

The following is taken from SFASU’s Policy Manual (2016), “Semester Grades Policy” (A-54). At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future semesters, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations.

For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

ACCEPTABLE STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.
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| WEEK 1 | Introduction to Course | ☐ Introductory Materials  
☑ Expectations for Students  
☐ Applying to Law School  
☐ LSAT | “How to Read a Legal Opinion” – Orrin Kerr  
Law School Admissions Council |
| WEEK 2 | Law School        | ☐ LSAT (bring scantron)  
☐ LSAT (bring loose-leaf paper) | GTM, Chapter 1  
LAW 101, Chapter 1 |
| WEEK 3 |                   | ☐ LSAT (bring scantron)  
☐ LSAT (bring loose-leaf paper) | GTM, Chapter 2 |
| WEEK 4 | Personal Statement| ☐ Personal Statement  
☐ Personal Statement Peer Review Day  
☐ *The Paper Chase* | GTM, Chapter 3 |
| WEEK 5 | The Law           | ☐ Rules vs. Counter-Rule Issues  
☐ Interpreting Statutes and Caselaw  
☐ Facts | GTM, Chapters 4-6 |
| WEEK 6 | Constitutional Law| ☐ Constitutional Law Intro  
☐ Constitutional Interpretation: Textualism  
☐ Constitutional Interpretation: Originalism | LAW 101, Chapter 2  
Scalia, p. 3-48  
Scalia, p. 49-94 |
| WEEK 7 |                   | ☐ Constitutional Interpretation: Structural Analysis  
☐ Constitutional Interpretation: Stare Decisis | LAW 101, Chapter 3  
Scalia, p. 95-128  
Scalia, p. 129-150 |
| WEEK 8 |                   | ☐ Constitutional Interpretation: Pragmatism  
☐ Constitutional Interpretation: Writing Day | LAW 101, Chapter 4-5 |
| WEEK 9 | Litigation        | ☐ Civil Procedure  
☐ Lawsuits and Jurisdiction  
☐ Parties, Trials and Juries  
☐ Tort Law  
☐ *My Cousin Vinny* | LAW 101, Chapter 4-5 |
| WEEK 10| Case Problem      | ☐ Case Briefing  
☐ Cases | BRIGHTSPACE Readings  
Case Assignments |
| WEEK 11|                   | ☐ Cases | Case Assignments |
| WEEK 12| Oral Arguments    | ☐ Oral Argument Presentations | |
| WEEK 13|                   | ☐ Oral Argument Presentations | |
| WEEK 14|                   | ☐ Oral Argument Presentations | |
| WEEK 15|                   | ☐ Oral Argument Presentations | |
| EXAM WEEK | Final Paper Due   | ☐ Submit paper copy of final during exam period | |

THIS IS A PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE ONLY. THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE CHANGES TO SCHEDULE AS NEEDED.