GOVT 2311: INTRODUCTION TO PRE-LAW
Stephen F. Austin State University
Department of Government
FALL 2023

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Dr. Donald M. Gooch
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Office: Vera Dugas Liberal Arts North 111
Office Phone: 936-468-2098
Office Hours: M&W, 10:00am – 12:00pm; T 11:00am – Noon; By Appointment

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Number: GOVT 2311
Section: 001
Prerequisites: The Two Core Intro Courses
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: MWF 9:00am - 9:50am
Room: T. E. Ferguson Liberal Arts 374

REQUIRED TEXTS


RECOMMENDED TEXTS

THE COURSE

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
• 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

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

• This is a LIVE course, so you will be required to attend the class sessions in order to do well in this course. This means being in class, at your seat, ready to participate in class, BEFORE the time the course is scheduled to begin. It means REMAINING in class for the entire period, unless you have previously arranged with me to leave class early. It means doing ALL of the assigned reading BEFORE the class so you can actively and fully participate in the class discussion and activities. It means having your phone silenced and put away. Ten percent of your grade is assigned to attendance AND participation – meaning you must participate in class, not merely show up.

• I have a 48-hour response procedure for student contacts. This means that, barring extraordinary circumstances, I endeavor to respond to any student contact within 48 hours of receiving it. Most such contacts are via email. I STRONGLY encourage you to email me directly at goochdm@sfasu.edu and NOT through D2L (unless it is about a specific grade). Keep in mind, emails sometimes do not reach their intended destination. If you have not heard from me within 48 hours of having sent an email to me – send another email and/or attempt another contact. If you have a specific question about your grade, it must be through D2L or discussed in office hours. Responses through D2L take longer, but still follow the 48-hour procedure. Phone calls to the office are not recommended.

• Late assignments are not accepted. Make-up assignments will only be allowed under exceptional circumstances. Having another exam or paper due that day is not an exceptional circumstance. Grades are non-negotiable. All assignments are posted to the calendar in the intro module, are scheduled on and are posted to the D2L calendar.

• 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 permitted under any circumstances.

- **Social Media Procedure**: In addition to our Brightspace course shell, we will have an official class GroupMe for questions, comments, and interactions among the students and instructor for this class. As such, non-official class groups, on any social media platform (Facebook, GroupMe, etc.), are strictly forbidden as “unauthorized collusion” under SFA’s Academic Integrity Policy. Such non-official groups present a threat to the academic integrity of the course. Posting about class interactions or class participants on social media is strongly discouraged, both for your sake and the sake of the class. Social media is not a good forum for discussing the class or issues in the class. Our discussions and debates should remain within the confines of the class. Any issues with the class you have over the course of the semester should be addressed directly with the instructor.

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**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. **#1 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. **#2 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 Week Five.
   c. **#3 Identify potential law schools (25 points).** Students will identify nine law schools they are interested in applying to when they go to law school, ranking the law schools based on the given trichotomy and explaining why each law school was placed in one of the three categories.

2) **Personal Statement and Reaction Papers:** You will write a personal statement and two reaction papers. 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** (100 points). Personal Statement must be 2-3 pages. You are required to submit a personal statement when you apply to law school. The personal statement expresses why you are interested in the law and what is unique to you that would make you a good candidate for law school.
   b. **Reaction Papers** (200 points, 100 points apiece). 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 Week 8. RP #2 is due Week 1.

3) **Case Briefs and Simulation Class.** (70 | 30 points) You will submit case briefs on BRIGHTSPACE. You must write a one-page brief for all cases assigned (7 cases), and you must submit your briefs on BRIGHTSPACE prior to their due date. No exceptions. Briefing cases not only helps you learn the material, but also 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 reserve the right to open an academic integrity inquiry using the appropriate channels. Once all cases are briefed we will have our simulated law school class. Participation in the simulation is worth 30 points.

4) **Content Quizzes.** Quizzes on the material in a given week will be assigned on a weekly basis. Quizzes will be completed on Brightspace within the given range of availability for the quiz (generally you will have a week to complete the quiz).

5) **Mock Trial Simulation.** (150 points) All students will be required to participate in the mock trial simulation. You will form a team of three students: a first chair attorney, a second chair attorney / witness, and a primary witness. If your trial is called and you are absent, then you get a zero for the Mock Trial (exceptions will be made for excused absences, but excused absences must be properly documented). Moreover, if you choose not to participate in the mock trial simulation, you will not earn higher than a C for the course.

6) **Mock Trial Paper.** (100 points) You will submit a mock trial paper based on the role you have taken in the Mock Trial. As Lead Attorney, your paper will be your Opening and Closing argument as both prosecution and defense. As Second Attorney and Primary Witness, your paper will be your direct and cross examination questions and anticipated witness answers – for both prosecution and defense cases.

7) **Attendance and Participation.** (100 points) You are expected to attend class. Consistent class attendance, reading and preparation, and participation are essential to successfully completing the course. This includes, the simulation, attending your one-on-one Pre-Law Advising meeting, and being an active participant.

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**WEIGHTING SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law School Assignments</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal State &amp; Reacts</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Briefs &amp; Sim Class</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Quizzes</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-Law Advising Plan</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mock Trial</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mock Trial Paper</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend &amp; Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000</strong></td>
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**GRADING SCALE**

<table>
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<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90% and up</td>
<td>1000 – 900</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80% - 89%</td>
<td>899 – 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70% - 79%</td>
<td>799 – 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% - 69%</td>
<td>699 – 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% &amp; below</td>
<td>599 – 0</td>
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**NOTE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

The use of artificial intelligence, large learning models, or other similar instruments to generate text or responses to prompts is strictly prohibited in this class. This includes, but is not limited to, ChatGPT, Google Bard, YouChat, Perplexity, OpenAI GPT, and Quora.
ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic Integrity (4.1)

The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (5.5)

Ordinarily, 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 coursework 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 terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf.

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 promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

Student Wellness and Well-Being

SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These
may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

**On-campus Resources:**

The Dean of Students Office (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)
www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents
936.468.7249
dos@sfasu.edu

SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic Human Services, Room 202
www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp
936.468.1041

The Health and Wellness Hub “The Hub”
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.

To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:

- Health Services
- Counseling Services
- Student Outreach and Support
- Food Pantry
- Wellness Coaching
- Alcohol and Other Drug Education

www.sfasu.edu/thehub
936.468.4008
thehub@sfasu.edu

**Crisis Resources:**

- Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
- National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- johCrisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741

**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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>COVERAGE</th>
<th>LECTURE TOPICS</th>
<th>READINGS / ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| WEEK 1 | Introduction to Course | o Introductory Materials  
 o Expectations for Students  
 o Case Briefing  
 o LSAT Preparation Introduction | “How to Read a Legal Opinion” – Orrin Kerr  
 Law School Admissions Council  
 Syllabus + Kerr Quiz |
| WEEK 2 | LSAT | o LSAT Preparation: Reading Section  
 o LSAT Preparation: Logical Reasoning Section | Case Brief 1  
 LSAT Prep 1 Quiz |
| WEEK 3 | Law School Application | o LSAT Preparation: Logic Games Section  
 o LSAT Preparation: Logic Games Section | Case Brief 2  
 LSAT Prep 2 Quiz  
 LSA #1: LSAT & LSAT ESSAY  
 Law School Assignment #2 Due |
| WEEK 4 | The Common Law Statutory Law | o LSAC & the Application  
 o Personal Statement & Addendum  
 o Personal Statement Workshop  
 o The Paper Chase | Brightspace Module  
 Law School Assignment #3 Due  
 Case Briefs 3, 4 & 5  
 MOCK TRIAL TEAMS DUE |
| WEEK 5 | Constitutional Law | o Interpreting Case Law and Case Analysis  
 o Constitutional Interpretation: Simulation Law Class | Brightspace Readings  
 Constitutional Law Quiz  
 Personal Statement First Draft Due |
| WEEK 6 | Appellate Law & Trial Law | o Appellate Advocacy, Appellate Briefing, & Oral Argument  
 o Trial Advocacy: Courtroom Demeanor; Openings | Brightspace Readings  
 Murray, p.67-94; 97-107  
 Appellate Advocacy Quiz  
 Reaction Paper 1 Due |
| WEEK 7 | Trial Procedures | o Trial Advocacy: Direct and Redirect  
 o Trial Advocacy: Cross-Examination  
 o Mock Trial Problem Overview | Murray, p. 107-153  
 Murray, p. 155-217  
 Trial Advocacy 1 Quiz |
| WEEK 8 | Objections and the Rules of Evidence | o Trial Procedures  
 o Objections and the Rules of Evidence  
 o My Cousin Vinny | Trial Advocacy 2 Quiz |
| WEEK 9 | One-on-One Pre-Law Advising Meetings | o One-on-One Pre-Law Advising Meetings | Pre-Law Advising Plan Due |
| WEEK 10 | Expert Witnesses | o Expert Witnesses  
 o Closing / Summation  
 o Case Problem Primer and Arguments Review | Murray, p. 311-350  
 Murray, p. 353-376  
 Trial Advocacy 3 Quiz  
 Personal Statement Final Draft Due  
 Reaction Paper 2 Due |
| WEEK 11 | Mock Trial | o Mock Trials | Mock Trial Problem 1 Quiz |
| WEEK 12 | Mock Trial | o Mock Trials | Mock Trial Problem 2 Quiz  
 Mock Trial Paper Due |
| WEEK 13 | FALL BREAK – THANKSGIVING | o FALL BREAK – THANKSGIVING | FALL BREAK |
| WEEK 14 | Mock Trial | o Mock Trials | Mock Trial Paper Due |

This is a preliminary schedule only. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to schedule as needed.

Updated: August 2023