

POLS 4760: Supreme Court Politics: The Institution and Its Justices

Dr. Christina L. Boyd

Wednesdays, Baldwin 101D, 4:40-7:40pm

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 or email for appointment

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the United States Supreme Court as a powerful political institution. Major topics include Court history, judicial selection, judicial decision making, lawyers, interest groups, oral arguments, and the role of the public. Students will be expected to actively participate in group presentations and mock events and write an empirical research paper on a topic relevant to the course. Regular attendance and active participation are essential.

Grading:

- Empirical Paper: 15%
- Mock Events Participation and Performance: 20%
- Group Research and Video: 10%
- Quiz 1: 25%
- Quiz 2: 25%
- Overall Participation/Attendance: 5%

Grading Scale:	
A:	94-100
A-:	90-93
B+:	88-89
B:	84-87
B-:	80-83
C+:	78-79
C:	74-77
C-:	70-73
D+:	68-69
D:	64-67
D-:	60-63
F:	< 60

Quizzes: Two announced quizzes will contain multiple choice, True/False, and short answer questions and will test material from your readings, lectures, and class discussions. The quizzes will not be cumulative.

Mock Events: This course includes two significant group events relevant to the material. This includes a judicial selection event in which we will hold Senate nomination hearings for potential new Supreme Court justices and an oral argument event, where students will serve as attorneys and justices and hold oral arguments on cases currently pending at the U.S. Supreme Court.

Group Research and Video: Students will work in small groups to develop and present a theme for the last 10 years of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Empirical Paper: You will also be expected to write a 7-10 page empirical paper related to a research question on the Court. Most students will choose to use the data discussed and learned in class, but other Supreme Court-relevant data will be permitted.

Attendance and Participation: Students should expect to score very well in the participation/attendance portion of the class if they have regular attendance and strong in-class participation. Attendance will be aided through seating assignments (selected during the first week of class). It is the responsibility of students who miss class to keep up with notes (from fellow students) from missed lectures.

Academic Integrity: Please see UGA's extensive policies on academic honesty (<http://honesty.uga.edu>). Be aware that under no circumstances will cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty be tolerated in this class.

Course Materials: Required Book (available at bookstore and online):

Unah, Isaac. 2009. *The Supreme Court in American Politics*. Palgrave Macm. ISBN 9781403972415

Additional readings are available on eLC. All assigned reading is to be conducted prior to listed class.

Schedule: Assignment dates are approximate. We may have to adjust them slightly depending on our speed during the semester. However, barring emergency, the dates for quizzes will not change.

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
Jan 10	Course Introduction; Introduction to the Supreme Court	
Jan 17	Supreme Court History and Foundations; Social Science Introduction	Unah chapter 1; Epstein & Martin (2014)
Jan 24	Supreme Court Database; Supreme Court in Perspective	SCDB handout; SCDB Memo
Jan 31	Judicial Departures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group video prep time 	Unah chapter 2; Rehnquist pgs 116-133
Feb 7	Judicial Selection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> **Group videos due Feb 6th @ 8pm** 	Unah chapter 3; Epstein et al (borked); Toobin
Feb 14	Agenda Setting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz #1 preparation 	Unah chapter 4; Perry; Blackmun
Feb 21	**Quiz #1** <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judicial selection event preparation following quiz 	
Feb 28	Solicitor General; Supreme Court Attorneys; Interest Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final nominees due via email to class Feb 25th @ 8pm Selection event prep time 	Pacelle; EchoChamber; Collins2004
Mar 7	**Judicial Selection Mock Event**	[group preparation]
Mar 14	Spring Break – NO CLASS	
Mar 21	Supreme Court Judicial Decision Making I	Unah 139-154; MaltzmanSpriggs& Wahlbeck-chap5; Epstein & Knight
Mar 28	Supreme Court Judicial Decision Making II	Murphy 67-70; Crisis-SupremeCourt (skip footnotes); Unah chapter 7 (skim); Nelson and Gibson; BlackOwensBrookhart
April 4	Finish Supreme Court Decision Making; Oral Arguments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper assignment discussion Oral arg event organization 	Unah Chap 5; JacobiSchweers2017; Case briefs TBA
April 11	Opinion Writing/Assignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prep for Quiz 2 	Unah 157-163; MaltzmanWahlbeck2004; Corley
Apr 18	**Quiz #2** <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final mock Oral Arg Event organization following quiz Last chance to turn in 1 page outline of research paper for comments 	
Apr 25	**Oral Argument Event**	[group preparation]
May 1	**Supreme Court Empirical Paper due at NOON** (eLC)	