

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

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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, mock events, and class activities and write an empirical research paper on a topic relevant to the course.

Grading:

- Empirical Research Paper: 20%
- Research Poster + Engagement with Others' Posters: 10%
- Mock Events Participation/Performance/Research: 20%
- Group Research and Video: 10%
- Exam: 20%
- Participation: 20%

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

Exam: There will be one exam. It will contain multiple choice, True/False, and short-to-medium length written answer questions and will test material from your readings, lectures, and class discussions.

Mock Events: There will be 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 a justice background event, where students will research and report on the prior history and judicial behavior of a particular justice on the Court (present or past).

Group Research and Video: Students will work in small groups to develop and present a theme for the last 15 years of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Empirical Paper: You will also be expected to write a 12+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. Students will also make posters about their research project for an in-class research symposium on the last day of the semester.

Participation: Students should expect to score very well in the participation portion of the class if they have regular and strong in-class participation in class discussions and activities. (Note that participation doesn't just mean talking in class. There are many ways to be strong at participation in a class like this.) 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. Barring the unforeseen, the dates for exams and mock events will not change.

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
Jan 8	Course Introduction; Introduction to the Supreme Court	
Jan 15	Supreme Court History and Foundations; Social Science and the Supreme Court; Supreme Court Database	Unah chapter 1; Epstein & Martin (2014); SCDB handout; SCDB Memo
Jan 22	Judicial Departures; Supreme Court in Perspective	Unah chapter 2; Rehnquist pgs 116-133
Jan 29	Judicial Selection	Unah chapter 3; Epstein et al (borked); Toobin
Feb 5	Agenda Setting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> **Group videos due Feb 4th @ 8pm** 	Unah chapter 4; Perry; Blackmun
Feb 12	Solicitor General; Supreme Court Attorneys; Interest Groups	Pacelle; McGuire; EchoChamber; Collins2004
Feb 19	Supreme Court Judicial Decision Making: 3 Models	Unah 139-154; Posner-Marshall; Epstein & Knight
Feb 26	Supreme Court Judicial Decision Making & Beyond <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final nominees due via email to class Feb 27th @ 8pm Exam preparation 	Baum; O'Brien; Ura and Merrill; BlackOwensBrookhart; Crisis-SupremeCourt (skip footnotes)
Mar 4	**Exam** <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judicial selection event preparation following exam 	
Mar 11	Spring Break – NO CLASS	
Mar 18	**Judicial Selection Mock Event**	[group/task preparation]
Mar 25	Litigant Briefs, Oral Arguments, Opinion Writing/Assignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper assignment discussion Introduction to Supreme Court Opinion Writing Archive Justice background event organization 	Unah Chap 5; Unah 157-163; JacobiSchweers2017; Corley; Powell-Rehnquist; Case briefs TBA
April 1	**Justice Background Event**	[individual and group preparation]
April 8	Individual Research Paper Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule TBA Bring 2 copies of paper plan to meeting 	Review Epstein & Martin (2014) and SCDB; Follow Paper instructions
Apr 15	Catchup/Makeup class	
Apr 22	**Research project poster symposium** in class	
May 1	**Supreme Court Empirical Paper due at 9am** (eLC)	