

POLS 4760: Supreme Court Politics

Karson Pennington

University of Georgia, Spring 2023

E-mail: karson.pennington98@uga.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday 9:30 – 11:00 am

Office: Baldwin Hall 303A

Class Hours: T/Th 8:00 – 9:15 am

Classroom: Baldwin Hall 301

Course Description

Supreme Court Politics: The Institution and Its Justices serves as an introduction to the United States Supreme Court as a powerful political institution and its justices as political actors. Major topics include Court history, agenda setting, judicial selection, judicial decision making, lawyers, interest groups, law clerks, oral arguments, and opinion assignment and writing.

Required Materials

- Baum, Lawrence. 2021. *The Supreme Court*. CQ Press. 14th Edition. ISBN-10: 1544390106; ISBN-13: 978-1544390109. Online textbook use is permitted.
- Additional readings will be available on ELC weekly.

Course Objectives

Successful students should be able to:

1. Assess the different ways in which judges make decisions.
2. Highlight the historical periods of the Supreme Court and comprehend the judicial selection process.
3. Critique and determine which behavioral models are most efficient for the Supreme Court.
4. Understand the intricacies of agenda setting and judicial collegiality, and how this affects the decisions produced.
5. Think about how politics can affect Supreme Court decision making, and how Supreme Court decision making can affect politics.

348239w

Course Structure

Class Structure

This course is designed to prepare you for a future in law school, graduate school, or the workforce in the field of political science. The abundance and intensity of readings is meant to challenge you; I do not expect you to have a full and complete understanding of the readings before class. What I do expect is for you to come to class with questions, and to leave with a more complete knowledge of these different aspects of the U.S. Supreme Court and judicial politics as a whole.

Grades

- **Exams** will be administered twice during the semester. These exams will be comprised of multiple choice, short answer (2-3 sentences), and essay questions. You will have the entirety of the class to take the exam (1 hour and 15 minutes). The dates of each exam are listed in the schedule, but are subject to change dependent upon our pace throughout the semester. **Makeup exams are only permitted in extraordinary circumstances such as documented medical emergencies.**
- **Attendance** will be taken randomly on 10 days (excluding exam days and mock event week) throughout the semester, and participation in class discussion will count as bonus points toward this grade. The amount of points, as well as the frequency, are determined by the quality and quantity of your participation. This means that if your attendance grade is lacking, for any reason, you can attempt to make up for it by being an active participant in discussions.
- The **Judge Memo** is a brief assignment due after our guest speaker's presentation in January. You will use what you learned during his presentation to draft a memo on the selection process. This memo should be 3 pages and include compliments and criticisms of our current judicial selection process.
- A **Research Paper** will be due during the final exam period in lieu of a final exam, in which you will be expected to write a minimum 8 page paper related to a research question on the Court. We will have multiple check-in points during the semester to ensure that you stay on track. More information on this paper will be shared during class. The research paper will be due on May 5th at 11:59 pm and should be turned in on ELC.
- A **Mock Event** will allow you an opportunity to witness how individual behaviors shape the makeup of the Supreme Court. We will hold mock Supreme Court nomination and confirmation proceedings. Each of you will be assigned to different roles, including Senators and potential nominees. This event will take place at the end of March. More details will be shared during class.

Grading Summary

I reserve the right to curve the scale dependent on overall class scores at the end of the semester. Your final grade will count these assessments using the following proportions:

- 40% of your grade will be determined by 2 in-class exams (20% each).
- 20% of your grade will be your Research Paper. The paper will be worth 15% of this grade, and the outline will be worth 5%.
- 20% of your grade will be the "Mock Event." This will be graded on your individual effort towards your group's bench.
- 10% of your grade will be the "Judge Memo." This will be graded following our guest speaker's presentation in January.
- 10% of your grade will be determined by attendance (with participation as an added grade).

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

Class Policies

During Class

I absolutely understand that using laptops to record notes is important, so computers will be allowed in my classroom, as long as the use of these devices does not disturb the learning capability of other students. If laptops are discovered to be used for any other purpose than academics, pertaining to this course, then the privilege of electronic devices will be taken away. I aim to respectfully allow each student the same learning capability, which could be hindered by the use of electronic devices. Phones will not be allowed during class time, except in case of emergency. Eating and drinking are permitted, so long as we can respect our classroom and allow for regular class to be conducted.

Attendance Policy

As mentioned above, attendance will be taken randomly on 10 days throughout the semester (excluding exam dates and mock event week), and this will account for 10% of your grade. Excused absences will include those with legitimate documentation, which can be sent to my email up to 7 days after the absence. Your attendance grade is up to you.

Policies on Incomplete Grades and Late Assignments

I will accept incomplete or late assignments when a legitimate excuse is provided. This requires documentation, and notice as soon as possible. I am flexible, and understanding, but I must be aware of your circumstances to be able to accept incomplete or late work. Incomplete work without an excuse will be graded as such, and late work without an excuse is subject to a 10% reduction in overall grade for every business day after the deadline.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

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.

Mental Health and Wellness at UGA

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services. UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>). If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.

Disability Accommodations

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). I will accommodate requests from the DRC in this course. Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

Prohibition on Class Recordings and Distribution of Course Materials

Please do not take audio or video recordings of course lectures or discussions (live or Zoom) or repost any course materials (recorded, links, written) without my express permission. Doing so violates my and the University of Georgia's intellectual property and the privacy of your fellow classmates as protected under federal and state law.

Schedule and Weekly Learning Goals

The schedule is tentative and subject to change. The learning goals expressed in the syllabus above should be viewed as the key concepts you should grasp after each week.

(Week 1) 1/10 and 1/12: Introduction to the Supreme Court

- Segal & Cover 1989
- Spaeth & Segal 2000
- DUE on 1/12 at start of class: syllabus quiz on ELC

(Week 2) 1/17 and 1/19: Supreme Court History and Foundations

- Baum, Chapter 1: The Court
- McGuire 2004

(Week 3) 1/24 and 1/26: Judicial Selection and Guest Speaker

- Baum, Chapter 2: The Judges
- Tobias 2010
- DUE on 1/26 at start of class: questions (2) for guest speaker, Judge William Ray III (Northern District of Georgia)
- ATTENDANCE MANDATORY ON JANUARY 26TH.

(Week 4) 1/31 and 2/2: Agenda Setting

- Baum, Chapter 3: The Cases
- Black & Boyd 2013
- DUE on 2/2 at start of class: Judge Memo on Judge Ray's presentation.

(Week 5) 2/7 and 2/9: Exam 1

- Review for Exam 1 on Tuesday, 2/7
- Exam 1 on 2/9

(Week 6) 2/14 and 2/16: Supreme Court Judicial Decision Making: Introduction

- Baum, Chapter 4: Decision Making

(Week 7) 2/21 and 2/23: Supreme Court Judicial Decision Making: 3 Models

- Bailey 2008
- Baum 1994
- George & Epstein 1992
- Lax 2010

(Week 8) 2/28 and 3/2: Judicial Departures and Supreme Court in Perspective

- Peretti & Rozzi 2011

(Week 9) SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS

(Week 10) 3/14 and 3/16: Supreme Court Impact

- Baum, Chapter 5: Policy Outputs
- Baum, Chapter 6: The Court's Impact

(Week 11) 3/21 and 3/23: Mock Event Preparation

- DUE at start of class on 3/23: Mock Event Research

(Week 12) 3/28 and 3/30: Mock Event

(Week 13) 4/4 and 4/6: Current Issues at the Court

- Ansolabehere & White 2020

(Week 14) 4/11 and 4/13: Exam 2

- Review for Exam 2 on Tuesday, 4/11
- Exam 2 on 4/13

(Week 15) 4/18 and 4/20: Research Paper Review

- DUE at start of class on 4/20: Research Paper Outline

(Week 16) 4/25 and 4/27: Office Hours and End of Semester Wrap-Up

Reading Day is May 2; Final exam period is May 3-9

Supreme Court Research Paper due on May 5th at 11:59 pm on ELC