Professor Christina Boyd
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Office Hours: By appointment

**Course Description:**
This course examines courts and judges in the American political system, the selection of judges, the flow of decisions through trial and appellate courts, the participation of non-judicial actors, the considerations of judicial decision making, and the relations between courts and other government institutions.

**Grading:**
20% Participation
20% 2 Critical Manuscript Reviews
35% Research Paper (and Proposal)
5% Research Paper Presentation
15% Midterm Exam
5% Syllabus Creation Assignment

Your participation will be evaluated on a number of components, including your regular attendance, your thoughtful and prepared participation during seminars, and your performance as a discussion leader. You will serve as a discussion leader twice this semester.

*More on discussion leaders:* Most substantive classes will have discussion leaders. Your jobs in this role may include: prepare discussion questions for the class, think critically about how the work fits together (or doesn’t), discuss the question(s) that are being tackled by the research, crystallize what is learned from the research, help your classmates analyze/critique the authors’ theory, research design, methodology and/or conclusions, and propose remaining questions or new avenues for research in the area. Every class will proceed differently, so be flexible and always be prepared (whether you are the discussion leader or not). Unless otherwise noted in class, discussion leaders are not responsible for readings marked “skim” or “recommended background.” Notes based on prior experiences: (1) discussion leaders should not be providing lengthy lectures on the material. Your role is to facilitate discussion of the assigned articles and the broader topic. Get your classmates to talk! (2) At times, Dr. Boyd will step in in minor or even major ways to help facilitate discussion and keep the conversation moving in the right direction. When this happens, the discussion leader will often be the first person Dr. Boyd calls on to answer questions. This semester, every student will be a discussion leader twice. Sign up for two your discussion classes of choice here prior to class on 1/18 [link provided in non-public syllabus].

The two critical manuscript reviews will require you to read and write a critical yet constructive peer review on a judicial politics-related manuscript being submitted to a peer-review journal. Further instructions and examples will be provided with the first assignment.
Each student is required to write an **original research paper** that empirically, formally, or otherwise systematically analyzes a topic (loosely) connected to this course. To do this, you need to develop a testable research question, find or collect data relevant to that topic, analyze those data, and write up and present those findings to the class. The level of required data collection and analysis can vary based on your field of study and level in the program (as determined after consultation with Dr. Boyd). Paper proposals are due in class, after which we’ll talk more in person about your project and ideas for successfully moving forward. At the end of the semester, you will present your research project and any findings to the class in a conference-style presentation.

- I will permit co-authored papers, but only if all co-authors are enrolled in the class. Keep in mind that if you are a Ph.D. student and you plan to have your second field be methods, you will need a strong solo authored paper for submission to that.

Students will take an open book, open note (no collaboration), essay-style **midterm comprehensive exam** derived from the body of material in the course up until the exam. Further details will be distributed later in the semester.

Students will also be tasked with designing their own **syllabus** for an undergraduate judicial politics course. This fun and practical task will require thoughtfulness in organizing appropriate course material, planning class activities and assessment, and selecting a textbook and/or external readings. More details on this assignment will be provided during the semester.

**At the end of this course, students should be equipped to:**

- Identify the key legal institutions and actors in the United States.
- Evaluate how political and strategic factors affect presidential and senatorial decisions in the nomination and confirmation of federal judges.
- Assess how different judicial selection systems in U.S. states affect which judges serve and what decisions those judges make on the bench.
- Describe, assess, and critique the primary legal and political theories used to examine and explain judicial behavior and votes.
- Identify how judges and justices account for hierarchical, public opinion, and legitimacy considerations when making decisions.
- Comprehend how foreign and international courts and judicial decision making considerations differ from those in the U.S.
- Access, interpret, and critically analyze U.S. Supreme Court data from 1791 to the present, U.S. state supreme court data from 1995-2010, and other important judicial data sources.

**Required books [order online; not in campus bookstore]:**


*Other course readings are available online (via J-STOR, google scholar, HeinOnline, etc) or eLC. Scholarly articles are available to you with ease on Google Scholar when on campus or logged in through your UGA library when off campus. If unfamiliar with how to access materials this way, please ask me or your fellow classmates, and we will be glad to help.*
Schedule: Schedule is approximate; assignments may be adjusted during the course of the semester depending on our pace in class. Special Note: All assigned reading is to be conducted prior to the class for which it is listed.

1/11 – Course introduction video online (see eLC course page)

- No in person class this date b/c Boyd is at SPSA conference. See online video posted on eLC for introduction to course, syllabus, and semester expectations.
  - Make sure to sign up for 2 discussion classes prior to 1/18 class.
  - Make sure to buy course books (online) prior to 1/18 class.

1/18 – Federal Judicial Selection and Departures


1/25 – State Judicial Selection and Departures

2/1 – Judicial Decision Making I

- Segal, Jeffrey A. and Harold J. Spaeth. 2002. The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model Revisited. Cambridge Univ Press. [discussion on pages 44-96; skim Chaps 7, 8]
  - Skim these additional articles to understand the debate following the Richards and Kritzer article [no discussion required of additional articles]

2/8 – Judicial Decision Making II

- An Introduction to the Federal Judicial Database [on eLC; no discussion]

**Manuscript Review #1 due at the beginning of class on 2/8**

2/15 - TBA special class

- No discussion leaders today
- Class will be abbreviated, with details forthcoming
**2/22 – Measures and Data Sources**

- SCDB Memo on eLC + preview database at www.scdb.wustl.edu [All students should read]

**No assigned discussion leaders this week of 2/22. Instead, and unless otherwise noted, above readings should be divided among all of class to informally present to class by theme (work in groups to divide and conquer)**

**2/29 - In Class Midterm**

**3/7 – No Class (Spring Break)**

**3/14 - Supreme Court I (Cert, Lawyers, Amicus, SG)**


3/21-Supreme Court II (oral arguments, opinions, clerks)

**Recommended Background:** Segal, Jeffrey A. and Harold J. Spaeth. 2002. The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model Revisited. Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 9]

**Research Paper Proposal due no later than start of class on 3/21**

3/28-Colaegal Courts and Judging

4/4-Trial Courts and Judicial Hierarchy
• Harris, Allison P. ND. “Can Racial Diversity among Judges Affect Sentencing Outcomes?” American Political Science Review Forthcoming https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000552


**Manuscript Review #2 due on 4/4 at start of class**

4/11 – Courts and the Public


• Scott, Jamil S., Elizabeth A. Lane, and Jessica A. Schoenherr. N.D. "You Better Shop Around: Litigant Characteristics and Supreme Court Support." Working Paper, available on eLC.

**Syllabus assignment due at start of class 4/11**

4/18 – Courts and Bureaucracy


• Boyd, Christina L., Michael J. Nelson, Ian Ostrander, and Ethan D. Boldt. 2021. The Politics of Federal Prosecution. Oxford University Press. [Chapters 5 and 6 only; on eLC]

• Blasingame, Elise N., Christina L. Boyd, Roberto F. Carlos, and Joseph T. Ornstein. N.D. “How the Trump Administration’s Quota Policy Transformed Immigration Judging.” Accepted for publication American Political Science Review.

4/25 -- Comparative and International Courts


5/2 – Research Presentations in Class

5/6 – Final paper due by 8:00pm (submit via eLC)