

Constitutional Law: Rights and Liberties
Political Science 4710
Fall 2025
10:20-11:10
Baldwin 302

Instructor

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Office Hours

Monday and Wednesdays 9-10 am, and by appointment

Course Description

Using a traditional case approach and court simulations (moot courts), this course explores the role of the United States Supreme Court as a civil liberties policymaker, and the process through which decisions are reached. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the philosophical bases and historical development of constitutional civil liberties. In addition to examining Supreme Court cases, we also examine the political factors that to shape our understanding of these issues. Students should gain a deeper understanding of Constitutional doctrine, as well as the crucial role of politics in the legal process.

Suggested Text (not required)

Constitutional Law for a Changing America: Rights, Liberties, and Justice.
Lee Epstein, Kevin McGuire, and Thomas G. Walker, 12th ed. ISBN no. 1071901664

Course Requirements

The assignments listed below are intended to provide each student with several opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the course objectives. Specific requirements are as follows:

1. Exam One	20 percent
2. Exam Two	20 percent
3. Exam Three	20 percent
4. Class Participation	15 percent
5. Written Assignments	15 percent
6. Moot Court	10 percent

Grading Scale

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	below 60

Description of Course Requirements (see ELC for more information)

Exams (60%): There will be 3 non-comprehensive exams each worth 20 percent. The exams will be mostly short answer and are conducted in-class on each student's personal laptop or tablet. Students should be able to identify and understand a specific ruling issued by the Court in each case and the standard of review utilized. They should also be able to assess the political significance of a decision for the development of public policy. Students are responsible for all background and related material covered in class or assigned readings.

Class Participation (15%): Attendance will be observed and formally taken in all classes. Participation points are based upon regular attendance, as well as actual class participation. To receive an A for class participation you must attend class on a regular basis, discuss any assigned reading and cases, and participate in class discussions and class activities. Class prep should include reading and "briefing" cases prior to class.

STUDENTS ARE ALLOWED THREE (3) ABSENCES BEFORE THE CLASS PARTICIPATION GRADE IS IMPACTED. No communication about these absences is necessary- take them if you need them.

Written Assignments (15%): Short writing assignments will be posted throughout the semester, with parameters identified and a grading rubric provided. Assignments turned in after their due date will receive a 10% penalty per day.

Moot Courts (10%): Students will be given actual cases on the current SCOTUS docket to simulate the process of oral argument and decision making in the Court. As such, each student will act as attorney, justice, or amicus (if numbers allow) in one of these cases. Students who sign-up as attorneys will work as a team to research the relevant case law, develop notes to assist presentation, and participate in oral argument before the court. Students who participate as justices will act as a justice during oral argument, conference, and decision on the merits. Students who participate as amicus will write an amicus brief to be turned into the professor before the case is scheduled for argument. Students will have an opportunity to sign up for their preferred case and role as the semester progresses. Anyone who misses the deadline for sign-ups will be assigned a case and role by the professor.

*****Missed Assignments, Late Assignments and Extra Credit*****

POLICY ON MISSED EXAMS/ ASSIGNMENTS:

Students who have a legitimate reason for missing an exam or assignment must notify the professor before the exam/ assignment is due and provide the professor with validating evidence. Students with a valid excuse will be allowed to makeup the exam/ assignment no later than one week after the exam/assignment is due.

- Exam make-ups are not guaranteed and are only allowed in the event of extenuating circumstances approved by the professor.
- Late assignment submissions will receive a 10% deduction, per day.

POLICY ON EXTRA CREDIT:

****Extra credit opportunities are not available to individuals, and requests for extra credit will be ignored. ****

SPECIAL NOTES

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PROFESSIONALISM

Standards of Conduct for Students: Students should behave in a professional manner at all times. It is essential that the environment in this classroom and any other classroom be conducive to learning and tolerant of all races, ethnic groups, and gender. Any student behaving in a manner that is in any way disruptive or inappropriate to the professor or to other students in the class will be referred to the appropriate authority.

UGA Student Honor Code

"I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others."

A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at honesty.uga.edu.

Important:

Unauthorized use of AI software or word mixing software to write any assignment or disguise plagiarized work is considered unauthorized assistance in this course. All assignments will be scanned by AI and plagiarism detection software.

PREFERRED NAMES AND/OR PRONOUNS

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

PROHIBITION ON RECORDING LECTURES

In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:

- Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
- Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
- Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.
- Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they will not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials.
- Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
- Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.

COURSE OUTLINE

Topic 1	Introduction to the Supreme Court and Judicial Review
Topic 2	Free Exercise of Religion
Topic 3	The Establishment Clause
Topic 4	Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Association
Topic 5	Freedom of the Press: Media and Prior Restraints
Topic 6	Libel
Topic 7	Obscenity, Violence
Topic 8	Second Amendment
Topic 9	Right to Privacy
Topic 10	Equal Protection in Education
Topic 11	Equal Protection: Race and Affirmative Action
Topic 12	Equal Protection: Gender, Sexual Orientation, Other

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sept 5	Writing Assignment 1 DUE
Sept 15	Exam 1
Sept 29	Writing Assignment 2 DUE
Oct 10	Exam 2
Nov 7	Writing Assignment 3 DUE
Nov 17-21	Moot Court Week
Dec 1	Exam 3
Sept 1	LABOR DAY
Oct 31	FALL BREAK
Nov 12	WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE
Nov 26-28	THANKSGIVING BREAK

Disclaimer

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.