

**POLS 4740H - Judicial Process
Fall 2026**

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Office hours: Weds., 3-4pm
Meetings: WF 11:35-12:55 (face-to-face)

This course introduces students to basic concepts of the American judicial process. The composition and function of American legal institutions are discussed. This includes (but is not limited to) the legal profession, state and federal court systems, judicial behavior, judicial process, and state and federal judicial selection.

Course Description

The relationship between law and society, types of law, and the operation of the judicial branch of government, particularly in the United States.

Prerequisite

(POLS 1101 or POLS 1101E or POLS 1101H or POLS 1101S) and permission of Honors

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to provide a framework for students to critically examine the functions of the legal system. To accomplish this goal, students will learn the organization of American courts, the processes surrounding civil and criminal litigation, and basic legal principles in specific legal policy areas.

Topical Outline

1. Function of law and legal system
2. Federal court organization
3. Federalism and state court systems
4. Judicial selection: federal and state methods
5. Lawyers and legal education
6. Criminal court process, including plea bargaining and trials
7. Civil litigation
8. Access to the courts and resources
9. Judicial review and other instruments of judicial power
10. The role of the courts in a democracy
11. Judicial policies: implementation and impact
12. Constitutional interpretation
13. Statutory interpretation
14. Influences on judicial decision making

Students in this course should become familiar with the structure and functions of the federal courts, state courts, and the legal profession. In addition, students will develop research skills including proficiency in academic writing and familiarity with academic journals and databases.

Readings. The following required text should be available in the bookstore:
Carp, Manning, Holmes, Bowie, *Judicial Process* (13th edition, 2025)

All readings *not* from this textbook will be available via ELC. Additional readings and items of interest will be posted to ELC.

Examinations. There will be a midterm examination and a final examination. No exceptions will be made for the scheduled examination times except in the case of a documented medical emergency. *Exams will be taken without notes or outside sources.* If you have additional needs or have permission from the Disability Resource Center for extra time on exams, please contact me privately and arrangements will be made.

Papers. One 10-12 page research paper will be due on **November 20**. Your paper will examine either (1) the career path of a specific judge of a state court or lower federal courts (i.e., not a U.S. Supreme Court justice), (2) the case history of a recent Supreme Court case, or (3) a major challenge that courts are facing in the United States. Please check with the professor to receive approval for your topic. Your paper must apply theories and concepts from course readings and other academic scholarship. More details on the paper assignment will be distributed via ELC.

Grading. Midterm examination 30%; Paper 30%; final examination 40%

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

100-94	A	89-86	B+	79-76	C+	69-66	D+
93-90	A-	85-83	B	75-73	C	65-60	D
		82-80	B-	72-70	C-	59-00	F

UGA Well Being Resources

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community.

Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.

- *Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu*
- *Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu*
- *University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu*
- *Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273*
- *Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu*
- *Accessibility and Testing: accessibility.uga.edu*

Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting <https://well-being.uga.edu>

Academic integrity

Neither plagiarism nor cheating will be tolerated. Appropriate citations are expected and encouraged. All students are expected to behave in accordance with the guidelines of the UGA Honor Code. If you are unsure whether certain actions are acceptable, consult your instructor. Use of artificial intelligence (e.g., ChatGPT) to write class assignments will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade (F). You may use generative AI tools responsibly to assist with the research process.

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. Every course syllabus should include the instructor's expectations related to academic honesty.

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Attendance. This course will not have a graded attendance component, but much of the lecture material will not appear in the readings. Everyone is encouraged to attend regularly. Students will be informed of any adjustments to regular course attendance by the instructor via ELC and/or e-mail.

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. Please advise me early in the semester if I need to make any appropriate changes to my records regarding your preferred name.

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

Aug. 19: Introductory meeting

Aug. 21

Foundations of Law & Courts in America

Carp, Manning, Holmes, Bowie, Ch. 1

Aug. 26, 28

Organization of American Courts

Carp, Manning, Holmes, Bowie, Ch. 2-3

Sept. 2

Jurisdiction and US Courts

Carp, Manning, Holmes, Bowie, Ch. 4

Sept. 4, Sept. 9

Legal Education and Law Clerks

Todd Peppers and Chris Zorn, "Law Clerk Influence on Supreme Court Decision Making: An Empirical Assessment" *DePaul Law Review* (2008-2009) 58: 51.

Sept. 11, 16, 18, 23

Lawyers, the Legal Profession, and Interest Groups

Carp, Manning, Holmes, Bowie, Ch. 8

Patrick Schiltz, "On Being a Happy, Healthy, and Ethical Member of an Unhappy, Unhealthy, and Unethical Profession" (1999) *Vanderbilt Law Review* 52: 871.

Lawrence Krieger and Kenneth Sheldon, "What Makes Lawyers Happy? A Data-Driven Prescription to Redefine Professional Success" (2014-2015) *George Washington Law Review* 83: 554.

Sept. 25, 30, Oct. 2

Judicial Recruitment, Selection, and Turnover

Carp, Manning, Holmes, Bowie, Ch. 5, 6

Midterm exam OCTOBER 7

Oct. 14, 16

Judicial Decision Making

Carp, Manning, Holmes, Bowie, Ch. 7

Carp, Manning, Holmes, Bowie, Ch. 12

Carp, Manning, Holmes, Bowie, Ch. 13

Oct. 21

**Pre-Law Advisor Ashley Roseberry Talk, Q&A
and**

Research paper research and formatting discussion

Oct. 23, 28

Trial Courts: Criminal Cases

Carp, Manning, Holmes, Bowie, Ch. 9-10

Nov. 4, Nov. 6

Trial Courts: Civil Cases

Carp, Manning, Holmes, Bowie, Ch. 11

Nov. 11, 13

Appellate Courts: Process and Impact

Carp, Manning, Holmes, Bowie, Ch. 14

Nov. 18

Visit to Athens-Clarke County Courthouse

ACC Court Administrator Laura Welch, 10th District Court Administrator T.J. BeMent, others

Nov. 20

Judicial Administration and Leadership

Watch video of 2026 State of the Judiciary Report by Chief Justice Nels Peterson of Georgia before class meeting

Research paper due November 20 11:59PM via ELC upload

NO CLASS Nov. 23-27, Thanksgiving break

Dec. 1: Future of the Judiciary and Contemporary Challenges

No assigned reading

Dec. 2 – READING DAY, no class meeting

Final exam December 7, 12-3 PM