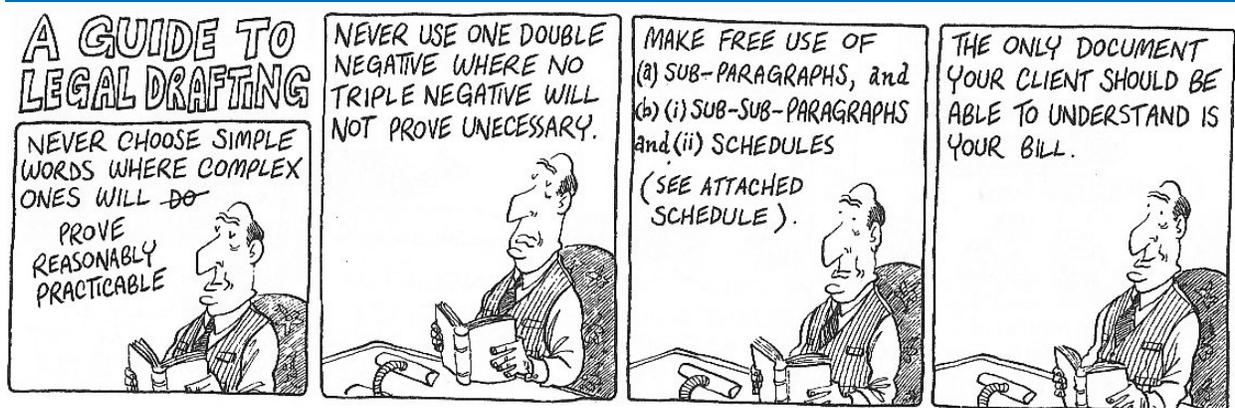


# INTRODUCTION TO LAW

POLITICAL SCIENCE 253 (001C)  
A USP EXPLORE COURSE | 3 CREDITS

SPRING 2021 | T/TH 9:40–11:10 | ONLINE (SYNCHRONOUS)  
POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH



## PROFESSOR

Jerry D. Thomas  
Pronouns: he/him/his (for now)  
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J.D., Chicago-Kent College of Law  
Ph.D., University of Kentucky  
M.P.A., University of South Carolina

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The development of political systems of jurisprudence, the judicial system of the United States and Wisconsin together with a survey of the major branches of law designating the place of law in society.

This course introduces students to the study of law. It will provide students with a basic understanding of the American legal system and the fundamentals of legal research and legal analysis. The course surveys several areas of law including Constitutional law, torts, contracts, property, and employment.

This course counts as an “Explore” course in the University Studies Program (USP). There are no prerequisites for this course.

## ONLINE LEARNING & CANVAS

This course is taught entirely online. This is a synchronous course, which means it is taught “live” at the scheduled times when students are connected and active. Students are expected to be present for class the same as if this course were taught face-to-face. The primary system I use for instruction is *Canvas*. There are a number of resources to help students get acclimated to Canvas. Here is a course to help students learn the basics. [Canvas Introduction](#).

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## OFFICE HOURS

My office is Sage 4619, but because of the pandemic, I will be working almost exclusively from home this term. I will hold “student drop-in hours” in Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) MW 10:30-12:00 or by appointment.

The Political Science Department uses Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) for holding office hours. This system is available to all UWO students. When logging into MS Teams, look closely at the status symbols for your instructor. A green dot by the professor’s icon (which may be their picture or their initials) means they are available. A red dot means they are busy. Generally, you are able to join office-hour meetings and talk openly in the forum or use the chat function freely. At times, I may be in a private meeting with a student during office hours, and I will mark my availability as “busy” (a red dot). We hope that using MS Teams for office hours for all of our courses will help students become more accustomed to virtual office hours during the pandemic. The main point to remember is that we are available to you. Please use our office hours freely and often. We are here to help. Many faculty are also happy to set up meetings outside of office hours if students have conflicts with the posted times.

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## TEXT AND READINGS

Currier and Eimmermann, *The Study of Law: A Critical Thinking Approach* (2016) (**required**)  
ISBN: 978-1-4548-5222-3

Other readings will be available electronically at no additional cost to students.

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## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### *Legal Studies Learning Outcomes*

- Describe the structure of courts and legal systems in the U.S.
- Critically read and evaluate legal cases
- Conduct legal analyses (apply legal rules to new situations to formulate legal conclusions)
- Research legal and policy issues, including enacted law, common law, and legal scholarship
- Brief cases

### *Essential Learning Outcomes*

This course focuses on three UWO essential learning outcomes for students.

- Identify and objectively evaluate legal theories and assumptions
- Think critically and creatively about law
- Communicate orally and in writing arguments and ideas about law and policy.

### *Political Science Department Learning Goals*

This course focuses on developing students’ analytical skills (using legal analyses), written communication (case briefs and written analyses on exams), oral communication (expressing legal arguments during class), and critical examination and application of theory (applying legal arguments, which are theoretical arguments, to new situations).

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## INCLUSION

Law and politics affect all people irrespective of political affiliation, socio-economic status, gender, sex, race, sexuality, national origin, ethnicity, veteran status, religion, physical or learning ability, and other characteristics with which students commonly identify. So, I use inclusive pedagogies to foster input from everyone. *Input from all students is valued and expected.*

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## FREEDOM OF SPEECH

My classes are free speech zones. Say anything you want to say. No topic or viewpoint is off limits. Use any words or symbols you want to express yourself. Exercising freedom of speech carries the burden of being responsible for your speech. Similarly, exercising silence carries the burden of your silence.

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## ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

I use the 93/90/87 grading scale for this course.

A 93–100 B 83–86 C 73–76 D 63–66  
A- 90–92 B- 80–82 C- 70–72 D- 60–62  
B+ 87–89 C+ 77–79 D+ 67–69 F 0–59

Grades are based on the following elements.

### Participation (25%)

Good participation means students read and prepare before class and actively participate in discussions. Participation comfort levels vary substantially. At one end of the spectrum, students fear public speaking (more than death) and prefer to remain anonymous in class. These students should work actively to overcome this fear. On the other end of the spectrum are gunners. Gunners are eager to speak and tend to dominate conversation. These students should be mindful that learning involves active listening and should provide others an opportunity to speak. Quality of participation is as important as quantity. Students receive the best participation grades when they demonstrate critical thinking and assimilate complex ideas, including classmates' ideas, across a range of topics. These participators contribute meaningfully to the learning of others, including the professor.

There are formal opportunities for participation, including group projects and presentations.

### Exams (2 exams x 25% each = 50%)

Exams will be a combination of objective, short answer, and essay/issue-spotter questions.

**Case Briefs (25%)**—Students submit case briefs regularly throughout the course. Case briefs are due during the class period they are discussed. I do not accept late case briefs, because the primary purpose of case briefs is to help students prepare for class discussions.

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## ATTENDANCE

Attendance is expected and required. I take attendance at the beginning of class, mainly to learn student names. Because participation in discussions and activities is required, you should remember that you cannot participate if you are absent. Absences are sometimes necessary, but it is unnecessary to contact me about absences unless it is an extended absence.

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## DEADLINES AND MISSED ASSIGNMENTS

Turn in assignments on the due dates. Students who miss assignments will be excused only for university-approved reasons (e.g., documented illness, family death, university-sponsored activity).

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## EARLY ALERT

During the fifth week of classes, you will receive by e-mail notice about your progress in this course. This is called *Early Alert*. Early Alert helps you evaluate your study skills and class attendance so you know if you are

on the right track. If you need to make changes, there are tons of resources available. Early Alert grades are not permanent and do not appear on your transcript.

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### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Expectations for Academic Honesty: A college education is intended to develop your skills, knowledge, and confidence. Graded assignments are designed to work on these items. Thus, to gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence of a college-educated person all graded work is to be your own. When you are directed to work alone, an assignment or test must be done by you, its primary ideas are to be your own, and any outside materials should be dealt with properly (quoted when using someone's words, and cited when quoting or referencing them in any other way). When your teacher directs you to work in teams, the work is to be done by the team. More information can be found [here](#).

UWO is committed to academic integrity for all students. System guidelines state, "Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors." We expect students to review and adhere to procedures related to academic honesty as outlined in Chapter UWS 14, Wisconsin Administrative Code, available on the Dean of Students website [here](#). Students should direct specific questions regarding the code (and institutional procedures approved to implement the code) to the Dean of Students Office.

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### STUDENT CONSUMER INFORMATION

Students should see the following URL for disclosures about essential consumer protection items required by the Students Right to Know Act of 1990 available [here](#).

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### GRIEVANCES

The Department of Political Science is committed to offering you a high-quality classroom experience, and we take your feedback seriously. If you have concerns about anything related to this course, assignments, or teaching method, you are encouraged to first speak with your instructor directly. If you are not comfortable speaking with the instructor, you are invited to speak with the Chair of the Department of Political Science, Dr. James Krueger. He can be reached at [kruegerj@uwosh.edu](mailto:kruegerj@uwosh.edu). Should he be unable to resolve your concerns, he will guide you to appropriate resources within the College of Letters and Science.

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### ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

UWO provides reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or meet course requirements. We accommodate *flexibly* and *individually*. Register with *Accessibility Services* or Project Success to get an accommodation recommendation form.

#### Accessibility Services

125 Dempsey Hall

(920) 424-3100

[dean1@uwosh.edu](mailto:dean1@uwosh.edu)

[Accessibility Services Website](#)

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### NOTE TO POLITICAL SCIENCE MAJORS

Political Science majors should take Political Methodology (245) in either their sophomore or first semester of their junior year. PS245 is a prerequisite for the senior capstone, Political Analysis (401), and cannot be taken concurrently.

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## SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Changes to the schedule are inevitable, especially in a course on American government and politics where current events drive our focus and discussions. Changes to the schedule will be communicated in class or through e-mail. If substantive changes are made, notification will be provided in a timely manner and a revised syllabus made available.

### **Week 1 (Feb 1)**

- Canvas profile, parts of a case, briefing cases.
- Study of Law (Ch. 1)

### **Week 2 (Feb 8)**

- Functions and Sources of Law (Ch. 2)

### **Week 3 (Feb 15)**

- Classification of the Law (Ch. 3) Federalism

### **Week 4 (Feb 22)**

- Structure of the Court System (Ch. 4)

### **Week 5 (March 1)**

- Constitutional Law (Powers) (Ch. 6)

### **Week 6 (March 8)**

- Constitutional Law (Civil Rights and Liberties) (Ch. 6)

### **Week 7 (March 15)**

- Review and Exam 1

### **Week 8 (March 22)**

- Spring Break

### **Week 9 (March 29)**

- Torts (Ch. 7)

### **Week 10 (April 5)**

- Contracts (Ch. 8)

### **Week 11 (April 12)**

- Practice Exam
- Legal analysis

### **Week 12 (April 19)**

- Property Law (Ch. 9)

### **Week 13 (April 26)**

- Employment Discrimination Law (chapter 10)

### **Week 14 (May 3)**

- Current Events in Law

- Topics TBD

**Week 15 (May 10)**

- Review and Exam 2