

Department of Political Science | University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

Political Science 253 – Introduction to Law (online)

Spring Semester 2023

Professor Druscilla Scribner (Ph.D., University of California San Diego)

Office Location: Virtual

Office Hours: Tu/Wed/Thur 11:00 am to Noon and by appointment via MS Teams

Email: scribned@uwosh.edu

Class Time: Asynchronous (paced)

Class Location: Online

Political Science Department Office: Sage 4631, (920) 424-3456

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Political Science 253 Introduction to Law (SS) 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. **3 credits**

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.

Introduction to law is taught by the Political Science Department and is a required course for the Law and Policy Minor. It is also an Explore – Social Science (SS) course in the University Studies Program (USP). **This course has no prerequisites;** it is open to all students regardless of major or disciplinary focus.

Student Learning Outcomes: After completing this course, you should be able to:

- Describe sources of law and the structure of courts and legal systems in the U.S.
- Showcase a basic understanding of select major areas of law
- Utilize basic legal research skills to brief a case
- Apply legal rules to new situations to formulate legal conclusions
- Evaluate how the legal system addresses contemporary social issues
- Recognize issues of legal responsibility, professionalism, and ethics

Assessing student learning: This course uses a variety of methods, both formative and summative, to assess student learning. Assessment activities include quizzes, discussion assignments, writing assignments, and reflection. There is a cumulative final exam.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required textbook: *The Study of Law: A Critical Thinking Approach*, Fifth Edition. Katherine A. Carrier, Thomas E. Eimmermann, Marisa S. Campbell. Aspen Publishing

The text is available at the bookstore. It is also available as an eBook on VitalSource.com. eBooks are offered at different price points for six-month, twelve-month, or lifetime access periods to accommodate students' varying preferences and needs. The eBook is less expensive and includes embedded accessibility options, such as read to me and linked vocabulary. You may also find a rental option. *As long as you have the 5th edition, you can choose the format for your text.*

ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE COURSE EXPECTATIONS

This is an asynchronous online course - we do not have any zoom meeting times. But we do have a weekly schedule of assignments. You need to complete one week before moving to the next. Each new week is available starting the previous Wednesday at 11:59 pm.

There are a variety of activities to complete to reach our learning objectives each week. These activities include reading, online discussions, videos, mini-explanatory lectures, written assignments, quizzes, etc. These assignments have due dates.

PARTICIPATION

A three-credit course's standard number of expected work hours is 9 hours per week. This is a Political Science course. The style of the readings and assignments reflect this academic discipline, and the learning activities foster instructor-student and student-student interaction.

In online courses, your regular participation involves logging in to our course, navigating through the content pages in a module, completing the readings and videos, participating in discussions and other activities, and submitting assignments, quizzes, and exams.

Your participation is an integral part of your learning, but it also contributes to the learning of your peers. As members of our learning community, we are each responsible for creating an environment where we can all learn from each other.

To ensure each member of our course feels included and welcomed, we will treat each other with dignity and respect while acknowledging that each of us is unique and has different views and opinions about topics. Some of the topics we cover may elicit strong reactions. Please keep in mind that written communications can be easily misinterpreted. Each time you make a post or reply to a discussion, read it twice before you submit it to ensure the words you have chosen are considerate but also convey your message. If you feel a peer has violated these expectations, please get in touch with me directly; I will tend to your concern in a confidential matter.

Technology Requirements: We will use Canvas for class. Set up your Canvas notifications so you do not miss anything! Keep in mind that Canvas does not play that well with Apple. So be sure you are accessing Canvas through Chrome (not Firefox, and not Safari). Canvas only supports some file types (again, not Apple) - MS Word and PDF are good choices. Most assignments are simply submitted through the Canvas text box, so you just copy and paste your submissions into the text box.

Depending on how you decided to purchase your text(s) for this class (e.g., rental, paper copy, or electronic book), you may have other technical requirements related to your textbook. You have purchase options so that you can do you!

Web-based applications you will use in this course are all provided by UWO. They include Canvas and Microsoft Teams. For any technical problems, make sure you contact the UWO help desk right away! That's their job... so don't wait! These are not things I can help you with. See also:

- [Canvas Help](#) and [Canvas Student Guides \(very comprehensive\)](#)

- [UWO Knowledge Base \(Tech Support\)](#)

COURSE POLICIES

Course Schedule: We have a course schedule that we follow over the semester. You can find this schedule in our START HERE module. It is hyperlinked to our modules in Canvas. A non-linked version is at the end of this syllabus for your reference.

The course is organized in weekly modules. Each includes an overview highlighting what you need to accomplish during the week. The week's overview page lists the activities and associated assignments for that week; these must be completed to unlock and move to the next module.

Assignments and Grading: Your final grade in this course will be based on the following weighted assignment groups, using the UWO 93/87/80 grading scale.

- Weekly Discussions: 45%
- Weekly Reading and Chapter quizzes: 15%
- Weekly Learning Reflections: 10%
- Case Brief(s) and Analysis: 15%
- Final Exam: 15%

Letter Grade	Percentage Range	
A	100%	to 93%
A-	< 93%	to 90%
B+	< 90%	to 87%
B	< 87%	to 83%
B-	< 83%	to 80%
C+	< 80%	to 77%
C	< 77%	to 73%
C-	< 73%	to 70%
D+	< 70%	to 67%
D	< 67%	to 63%
D-	< 63%	to 60%
F	< 60%	to 0%

I know it can be frustrating to wait a long time to receive feedback or to know your grade. I will grade your work on Canvas as soon as possible (in conjunction with my other classes), ideally within 2-4 days from the due date. For papers with individualized comments, it may take more than a week. [You can see comments on Canvas.](#)

Absences, late work, and accommodations: All assignments are due by midnight (11:59 pm) on the scheduled dates. Because this is an asynchronous course, you have some flexibility with your time and should be able to adjust to minor personal and family emergencies; however, if you have a significant illness or issue that *impacts your ability to complete assignments on time or complete the course, you need to communicate with me right away.*

Missing work automatically receives a zero on Canvas when the due date/time passes. Late submissions are automatically subject to a 7% per day late penalty. A late penalty can be removed for extenuating circumstances and excused absences. *If you think you have extenuating circumstances, contact me.*

- *Excused absences and late work:* According to University policy, excused absences require documented evidence of medical necessity or an approved college-sanctioned event. We will work out a schedule for you to complete your work before or after your absence. Zeros and late penalties will be removed as work is turned in.
- *Unexcused absences and late work:* The late penalty is 7% per day – it is automatic and will diminish your potential grade to a floor of 65%. This means you can turn in late work and at least get a D. You are always better off submitting something rather than nothing! However, this grace period runs until the end of Spring break for assignments due in the first half of the semester and until the last day of class for assignments due in the second half of the semester.

Citations and Writing Expectations: The Political Science Department has [writing resources](#) for you, including the APSA style guide. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the APSA citation style and using it properly – if you have questions, ask.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is using someone else’s UNIQUE ideas, words, theories, evidence, findings, argument, etc., and passing them off as your own by not properly attributing or acknowledging the original source of those ideas. Plagiarism could result in failing the assignment or course. If you are unsure whether what you have written constitutes plagiarism, ask before you turn it in. If there is an issue, we will talk.

This class uses Turnitin technology to help you and me detect plagiarism issues. See the Dean of Students’ [resources on plagiarism](#) for more information about how we address these issues at UWO.

COURSE SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ACTIVITIES

We have a course schedule that we will follow over the course of the semester. The basic schedule is reproduced below. In Canvas, this schedule includes hyperlinks to our weekly pages with detailed plans and additional resources for each week. If anything changes in our schedule, I will inform you via announcements.

I have structured the course with lots of reminders and deadlines to keep you on pace to completion. You should sign up for Canvas notifications to ensure you do not miss class announcements and reminders.

Each week has its own module in Canvas, and each module is structured the same way with consistent assignments and due dates to help you structure your time. These include:

- *Learning objectives for the week*
- *Assigned reading in our textbook*
- *Related learning resources (such as a mini-lecture and/or concept explainer pages)*
- *Group discussion(s) assignments*
- *Chapter Quiz (due Friday)*
- *Learning Reflection (due Sunday night)*

Week 1: Introduction to Legal Reasoning and Critical Thinking

Jan 30-Feb 3 – Module available starting Jan 25.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study of Law

*Also complete the student survey and group introduction

Week 2: The Functions and Sources of Law

Feb 6-Feb 10 – Module available starting Feb 1

Chapter 2: Functions and Sources of Law

Week 3: The Classification of Law and the Court System

Feb 13-Feb 17 – Module available starting Feb 8

Chapter 3: Classification of the Law

Chapter 4: The Court System and the Role of Judges

Week 4: The Litigation Process and Its Alternatives

Feb 20-Feb 24 – Module available starting Feb 15

Chapter 5: The Litigation Process and Its Alternatives

Week 5: Constitutional Law – Freedom of Expression

Feb 27-Mar 3 – Module available starting Feb 22

Chapter 6: Constitutional Law

*Case Brief #1

Week 6: Constitutional Law – Freedom of Religion, Due Process and Equal Protection - Chapter 6: Constitutional Law

Mar 6-Mar 10 – Module available starting Mar 1

Chapter 6: Constitutional Law

*Case Brief #2

Week 7: Torts – Intentional wrongful injuries

Mar 13-Mar 17 – Module available starting Mar 8

Chapter 7: Torts

Spring Break

Mar 20- Mar 24

Week 8: Torts – Negligence and Liability

Mar 27-Mar 31 – Module available starting Mar 22

Chapter 7: Torts

Week 9: Contracts – Making Enforceable Agreements

Apr 3-Apr 7 – Module available starting Mar 29

Chapter 8: Contract Law

Week 10: Property – Ownership Rights and Distribution after Death

Apr 10-Apr 14 – Module available starting Apr 5

Chapter 9: Property and Probate Law

Week 11: Business – Employment Law

Apr 17-Apr 21 – Module available starting Apr 12

Chapter 10: Laws Affecting Business

Week 12: Family Law – Marriage, Divorce, Custody

Apr 24-Apr 28 – Module available starting Apr 19

Chapter 11: Family Law

Week 13: Ethical Dilemmas – Access to Justice

May 1-May5 – Module available starting Apr 26

Chapter 14: Ethical Dilemmas Facing Attorneys

Week 14: Wrapping up and Final Exam

Exam Available May 10-12

POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT POLICIES

Office Hours: The [Political Science Department](#) uses Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) for holding office hours. This system is available to all UWO students. Your Poli Sci faculty are available during their posted office hours (whether you are taking an in-person or an online class). To use MS Teams during office hours, send a chat to your instructor to let them know you want to meet - think of that as the equivalent of knocking on the door. We're here for you! Please use our office hours freely and often. Many faculty are also happy to set up meetings outside of office hours if students have conflicts with the posted times.

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 appropriately (quoted when using someone's words and cited when quoting or referencing them in any other way). When you are asked to work in teams, that work should be done by the group collaboratively. [More information can be found here.](#)

Concerns or Grievances: The Department of Political Science is committed to offering you a high-quality classroom experience, and we take your feedback very seriously. You should contact me if you have concerns about anything related to this course, assignments, or teaching method. That goes for your other classes, too: always talk to your professor first. But if you are not comfortable speaking to your instructor, you can always reach out to the Chair of the Department of Political Science, Dr. James Krueger. He can be reached at kruegerj@uwosh.edu. As needed, he can guide you to appropriate resources within the College of Letters and Science or the Dean of Students.

Note to Political Science Majors: Congratulations on joining a great major - the world needs your critical thinking, creative problem-solving, knowledge of the issues, and stellar communication skills!

Political Science majors should take Political Methodology (245) in either their sophomore year or the first semester of their junior year. If you have questions about this requirement, your course schedule, possible internships, or career preparation, please reach out to your faculty adviser. Students are encouraged to meet with their faculty advisers at least once per year. If you are unsure who your adviser is, you can check Titanweb or email Ms. Angelee Hammond at hammond@uwosh.edu.

Changes: If substantive changes are made to this course syllabus, such as changes in schedule or assignments, notification will be provided promptly, and a revised syllabus will be made available (see our course schedule page).
See the next tab for support resources

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

I want you to be successful! There are many [student resources](#) dedicated to your academic and personal success.

UW Oshkosh strives to create inclusive learning environments. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or meet course requirements. For more information, see the [Dean of Students](#) website and the [Accessibility Center](#).

If you have any situation/condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect your ability to perform in this class or access class assignments; please reach out to me so that we can work together on a plan for your success. Canvas is an ADA-compliant course management software suite. Both Canvas and our textbook have accessibility features that you may find helpful such as the immersive reader function.

Diversity drives innovation, creativity, and progress. At the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, the culture, identities, life experiences, unique abilities, and talents of every individual contribute to the foundation of our success. Creating and maintaining an inclusive and equitable environment is of paramount importance to us. This pursuit prepares all of us to be global citizens who will contribute to the betterment of the world. We are committed to a university culture that provides everyone with the opportunity to thrive.

By federal regulations set forth by [The Higher Education Act of 1965](#) (amended in 1998), [consumer information](#) is available to all students at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.
