

American Constitutional Law and Politics

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Fall 2020

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American Constitutional Law is a very broad topic. To introduce you to this area and provide an understanding of the concepts involved, this course will focus on civil rights and liberties.

COURSEPACK (available on **ICON**)/**BOOKS** (ordered through Iowa Book and Supply, 8 S. Clinton)

Coursepack, Parts I and II

Gifis, *Barron's Law Dictionary*, 6th ed. (5th edition or other law dictionaries are okay)

Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed.

The Coursepack contains the primary readings for the course consisting of cases, case summaries, and additional materials. Part I contains material that will be covered for the paper and practice test (Sections 1-12) Part II contains material that will be covered for the test (Sections 13-17). As I will explain in class, although the Coursepack is available in digital form, I strongly urge you to print a copy for course use. The reading assignments for the coursepack are listed below.

The other required books (Gifis, Strunk and White) are intended for reference purposes. Those unfamiliar with legal writing and terminology will find many new terms and a legal dictionary will help you learn them. Although I have listed the Gifis book as required, other law dictionaries are acceptable. I'll discuss this more the first day of class. One of the requirements of this course will be a paper (the specific assignment will be given later). A clear, concise, and error-free writing style is essential. Strunk and White, and other style manuals, will provide you with a review (or introduction) to many of the basics of good writing.

ON RESERVE (Reserved Reading Room, Main Library)/**ICON**

Strunk and White plus two other books have been placed on reserve at the reserved reading room in the main library. The books provide additional background information. Items on ICON, in addition to the Coursepack, include information on the value systems of the justices, the citation form to be used for the paper assignment, tips on how to take my multiple choice tests, and an extensive set of study questions. Three additional readings have been placed on ICON. They are related to course topics and will show you how to analyze cases in a brief (*Veralone v. Kratt*) and the basic format for writing a political science paper ("Constitutional Decision Making" and "So Many Cases").

GRADING

Grades will be based on the following (but see below for COVID Contingencies):

- One exam (50%). The exam will primarily cover material from Section 13 on and will be during the regular final exam period, time and location to be determined later.
- Optional practice multiple-choice test and quizzes: There will be an in person practice test scheduled for Tuesday, October 20, and will cover material through Section 12. (There will be no makeup if the practice exam is missed or cancelled.) There will also be three online practices quizzes, two before the practice test and one before the final exam.
- A paper (40%). General requirements for writing the paper are contained in materials on ICON. Specific details of the assignment will be given to you the class period following the practice test, but no later than Thursday, October 22. Nevertheless, you should read Strunk and White and the *Style Manual for My Courses* (on ICON) as soon as possible. You should familiarize yourself with these requirements before the paper assignment is handed out. The paper will be due at the beginning of class on Thursday, November 19.
- In-class participation and discussion (10%). I expect you to have read the assigned material prior to class and to be prepared to respond to questions. The material will be presented in a combination lecture and question-answer format. Each day several students will sign up to answer questions related to the reading assignment. The quality of these responses will form the basis of this portion of your grade. This assignment must be completed no later than October 15.

Based on your performance on the assignments (two tests, paper, and assigned discussion) you will be assigned a grade according to the following 100-point scale:

90 - 99 = A	80 - 83 = B	70 - 73 = C	60 - 63 = D
87 - 89 = A-	77 - 79 = B-	67 - 69 = C-	50 - 59 = D-
84 - 86 = B+	74 - 76 = C+	64 - 66 = C+	0 - 49 = F

READINGS

Below are the readings for the course. The material will be covered in the order listed in the Coursepack. Notice that readings are not assigned by specific date. As indicated above, you are to have read the assigned materials prior to class. The amount of material covered each class period will vary. You are responsible for knowing the material that will be covered each day, particularly if you are scheduled to answer questions on that day. Thus, you will need to read ahead to be prepared for what is covered on any given day. The list below is primarily to show when to do readings outside the Coursepack. "Section" = materials in Coursepack. "Reserve" = materials on reserve at the Main Library. "ICON" = materials on ICON. "Course website" = materials on my course website either in the Courses section or the section for this particular course.

- **Reserve:** van Geel, all (but especially Ch. 8); Strunk and White, all; **Course website:** *Email Info, Classroom Etiquette*; **ICON:** *Style Manual for My Courses*; **ICON:** Sample case and brief (*Stack v. Boyle*)
- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Bill of Rights; **ICON:** US Constitution; **ICON:** "So Many Cases, So Little Time"; **ICON:** "Value Systems"
- Section 3: Freedom of Speech – Advocacy of Violation of the Law
- Section 4: Obscenity; **ICON:** "Constitutional Decision Making" (read at end of section)
- Section 5: Fighting Words and Offensive Speech
- Section 6: Defamation
- Section 7: Freedom of the Press versus the Right to a Fair Trial
- Section 8: The Right to Silence; **ICON:** brief for *Veralone v. Kratt* (read at end of section)
- Section 9: The Public Forum
- Section 10: The Private Forum
- Section 11: Symbolic Speech
- Section 12: The Religion Clauses
- Section 13: Search and Seizure
- Section 14: The Privilege Against Self-Incrimination
- Section 15: The Right of Privacy
- Section 16: Racial Discrimination
- Section 17: Sex Discrimination

Sections from Alderman and Kennedy (book on reserve) should be read when we cover that material in class. The Articles section for the course on ICON also contains a list of articles that should be read as we cover various topics. I will mention some of these directly in class, but will generally leave it to you to read them when we cover the related material in the Coursepack.

IMPORTANT DATES

- 10/20 - Practice test (tentative date covering material through Section 12)
- 10/22 - Paper assignment given out by this date
- 11/19 - Paper due at beginning of class
- 11/24 and 11/26 - no class (Thanksgiving break)
- 12/? - Test 2, date and time to be announced later (primarily covering material after Section 12)

Any changes to the information contained in this syllabus will be announced in class.

COVID CONTINGENCIES

The grading procedures noted above are based on the assumption that we will have in person classes up to Thanksgiving break. If that changes, and it likely will, the method of delivering course content and grading procedures will likely change as well. Information on any changes will be noted in class or sent via email.

A FINAL COMMENT

I have found that some students have a tendency to suffer in silence. By that I mean that they will not say anything to the instructor if they are having problems with a course. This does no one any good. If you have a problem with the course (readings, assignments, lectures, etc.) come and talk to me about it. I cannot explain procedures or try to correct problems if I do not know they exist. Waiting until course evaluations to voice your opinion will not help you, and probably not me.

Continue to Parts 2 (policy statements) and 3 (other info) of the syllabus.