IMMIGRATION POLICY SEMINAR (Law 422)
George Mason University School of Law
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Instructors’ contact information

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Course summary

This course will examine U.S. immigration policy as it is embodied in our laws and procedures and will ask how our nation’s immigration policies reflect on our values as a nation. The course will discuss whom we let in, whom we keep out, how do we treat the people already here, and why.

The course is broken down topically along the lines of a typical immigration law class, but it is not concerned with the mechanics of the immigration laws. Instead, the class is intended to reach into the nation’s policy goals, the implications of our policies, and the unintended consequences when policies are poorly designed. For that reason, many of the sessions will culminate in a “controversy du jour” — a whimsical label for a serious immigration topic of current or recent debate.

Grading

The course is designed to test your reasoning and insight, not your recollection, and there will be no exams. However, policymaking involves debate, research, and writing, and the course grade will therefore be based on a substantial research paper and classroom discussion. Your course grade will be drawn from a combination of a final paper (70% of the grade) and classroom participation (30% of the grade).

Paper. The research paper will be written on a discrete ‘law review type’ topic of immigration law and policy that is approved by the instructors. Information and details about the paper will be provided during the semester. However, you should expect to produce a paper at least 25 pages in length, with appropriate citations and footnotes (not endnotes), and bibliography. Regardless of topic, you are encouraged to produce publication-worthy papers.

There are three deadlines for the papers. The topic selection is due to the instructors by March 8th. An outline or first draft of the paper is due to the instructors by April 1st. The final paper is due on May 10th.
*Classroom participation*. We highly value and *require* class participation. Students are expected to offer their opinions. Students should engage in honest contemplation and dialogue, challenge their own assumptions about immigration policy, and think outside the box as we wrestle with the leading controversies of the day. Accordingly, this course will evolve in response to the interests and creativity of the class.

Students are also expected to be familiar with the required readings. Be prepared to respond to questions about readings. If you are unfamiliar with the readings, your participation grade will suffer.

*Classroom*

*Discussion*. Immigration is a controversial topic, and popular and unpopular views will be articulated. Civility is therefore mandatory.

*Computers*. Laptops in the classroom are permitted, provided their use is limited to note taking and lecture-related research. We do *not* approve of e-mail, social media, or any other electronic activity that is not related to the class. Classes may *not* be recorded.

*Food and drink*. Beverages are permitted. Food is not.

*Readings and resources*

Each session has specific readings assignments, but you are not expected to master those readings specifically. The purpose of this course is not to test your knowledge of the reading materials, but your grasp of the concepts and your insight into the policy implications. Read the materials and prepare for class with this orientation in mind.

We do not use an assigned text, but rely instead on readings that are available on the Internet, Westlaw, Lexis, and case reporters.

Pay attention to material cited in the footnotes. Those footnotes provide excellent leads for paper topics and resources.

In addition to the reading assignments, you should be aware of the following resources and consider utilizing them in the drafting of your research paper:


Kurzban, *Immigration Law Sourcebook* — a one-volume practitioner’s handbook detailing the current immigration laws
IMMIGRATION BRIEFINGS (available on Westlaw) — a monthly periodical containing in depth discussions of discrete immigration topics

BENDER’S IMMIGRATION BULLETIN (available on Lexis/Nexis) — a monthly periodical containing in depth discussions of discrete immigration topics

INTERPRETER RELEASES (available on Westlaw) — a weekly immigration newsletter


We strongly encouraged you to bring to our attention any outside reading materials you have personally found helpful or worthwhile. Some of our best course materials have been identified by students.

First class

Readings are required before attending the first class. Please consult TWEN for those readings.