LAW 093: INTRODUCTION TO UNITED STATES LAW

2 Credits
Fall 2016
Monday, 6:00 p.m. – 7:50 p.m.
Professor Angel Martinez
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SYLLABUS

I. Objectives

This course will provide you the principles of United States law to develop a professional understanding of the American legal tradition and system and to pursue successfully the future study of specific legal topics of U.S. domestic law. The course will explore major topics in American jurisprudence. Through lectures, discussions, and written and oral assignments, you will develop your legal analysis and rhetoric skills in the U.S. legal context and develop a facility in using American legal terminology.

II. Course Materials and Reading Assignments

These are the class’ required coursebooks. Reading assignments will be given ahead of class.


III. Grading

Your grade will comprise of:

• Weekly one-page reaction papers (10%)
  ○ Grammar will be corrected, but this will not affect grading.
• Class participation (20%)
• Oral presentation (20%)
  ○ Students must prepare individually an oral presentation of a U.S. legal topic of their choosing or in teams one of the topics for class.
• Final exam (50%)

IV. Participation

A large part of class will be devoted to lecture. In every class, I will encourage a discussion of the material and the topic by asking questions or prompting a student to discuss a case or reaction paper. Although I will ask for volunteers, I may call on any
student without warning. Meaningful participation and contribution may enhance your final grade through a higher participation grade. Conversely, your final grade may be reduced if you repeatedly demonstrate through class participation that you have not done the reading and are unprepared for class.

V. Attendance

Timely attendance to every class is mandatory. You are expected to attend and participate in each class, and attendance is part of your participation grade. I reserve the right to reduce your final grade one entire grade (i.e., A to B, B to C) if more than three classes are missed during the semester without a valid excuse. The law school’s rules dictate that a student will not get credit for a two-credit course like this if more than five classes are missed. If you need to miss a class, please contact me in advance. *No laptops are allowed in class; please contact me with any concerns*

VI. Scheduling

This syllabus is not absolute. We may have meetings in addition to the ones listed below and/or may need to change dates. Reading and other assignments may likewise be changed or added. You will be notified in advance by email of any changes over the course of the semester and are responsible for knowing the required material and assignments for a particular class.

VII. The Honor Code and Plagiarism

The law school’s Honor Code is set out at: http://www.law.gmu.edu/academics/honor_code. The Honor Code is extremely important to protect the equity and integrity of your legal education, faculty take it seriously, and it will be strictly applied in this class. You must observe it. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with it.

Plagiarism is the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class, and any potential instance of plagiarism will be investigated and processed according to the law school’s Honor Code.

VIII. Office Hours

I can meet with students by appointment. Please contact me in advance by email.

IX. Course Outline

1. Introduction to the course, class expectations, outlining, and briefing cases (August 22, 2016)
   a. Presentations, objectives, expectations, assignments, and grading
   b. CALI: Plagiarism - Keeping Out of Trouble (listen in advance)
   c. Outlining for the course
   d. Briefing cases
Read in advance and prepare a brief for the case below:


Class exercise: briefing a case together (case opinion will be distributed in class)

2. The basics of legal writing (August 29, 2016)
   a. CALI: Legal Research Methodology (listen in advance)
   b. CALI: Learning Legal Analysis Through Its Components: Issue, Rule, Application, Conclusion – IRAC (listen in advance)
      - Read in advance:
   c. Class exercise: Negligence hypothetical; working through IRAC together (fact pattern will be distributed in class)
   d. Class exercise: Mock exam applying IRAC

3. Labor Day - Law School CLOSED (September 5, 2016)

4. Introduction to Common Law: Precedent and Overturning Precedent, Sources of Law (September 12, 2016)
   - Read in advance: TBD based on new casebook edition

5. Overview of the U.S. Constitution: Federalism and Separation of Powers (September 19, 2016)
   - Read in advance: TBD

   - Read in advance: TBD

7. Constitution continued – Civil Liberties: First Amendment (Freedom of Speech and Privacy) (October 3, 2016)
   - Read in advance: TBD

8. Federal and State Courts, Subject Matter Jurisdiction, Federal Question Jurisdiction, Personal Jurisdiction, Appeals (Class meets Tuesday, October 11, 2016)
   - Read in advance: TBD
9. **Civil Procedure:** Starting an action, trials, motions to dismiss, motions for summary judgment, discovery (*October 17, 2016*)
   - Read in advance: TBD

10. **Torts:** Introduction to torts, intentional torts, negligence, product liability (*October 24, 2016*)
    - Read in advance: TBD

11. **Contracts:** elements of a contract, the UCC (*October 31, 2016*)
    - Read in advance: TBD

12. **Criminal law and procedure:** Introduction to criminal law, criminal actions, criminal rights (Fourth Amendment, Fifth Amendment, the exclusionary rule) (*November 7, 2016*)
    - Read in advance: TBD

13. **Student Presentations** (*November 14, 2016*)

14. **Make-up Session/Student Presentations/Guest Lecturer** (*November 21, 2016*)

15. **Final exam review** (*November 28, 2016*)

16. **Final Exam** (*December 3, 2016 at 12:00 p.m.; Location: TBD*)