



## SPRING 2026 COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Number: Law 382-001

Course Title: Election Law

Credit Hours: 3

Grading Mode: Letter graded

Meeting Time(s): MON / 6:05pm-9:00pm

Meeting Mode: In Person

Exam Time(s): TBD

Exam Mode: Take home Final Exam

Prerequisite(s): None

Instructor(s):

Cameron Quinn and Andrew A. Rivera

Contact Information and Office Hours:

Rivera - [ariver38@gmu.edu](mailto:ariver38@gmu.edu); Quinn - [cquinn7@gmu.edu](mailto:cquinn7@gmu.edu)

Office hours by appointment

Reading(s) & Supplement(s):

No required text. Students will need to access cases and required reading online.

Course Overview:

An introductory “survey” class on US election law.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the federal election laws, major federal cases, and constitutional provisions, as well as how to access state election laws and rules, governing the election process and be able to identify their interrelationships.
- Students will analyze information and claims about election issues and persuasively argue the merits of those claims under applicable law.
- Students will apply election law information and skills to real world situations.
- Students will communicate their knowledge about election law issues orally and in writing, to a variety of audiences.

## Grading Policies:

Participation %: 20  
Presentation #1 %: 25  
Presentation #2 %: 10  
Final Exam %: 45

## Classroom Policies:

**Attendance:** Per AR 3-1.4, “maintenance of matriculation requires regular class preparation, participation and attendance, registration in the course of study required for the student’s program (full-time or part-time), successive registration for each fall and spring term of each academic year until study is completed, and compliance with all other relevant requirements.”

**Absences:** Per AR 4-1.1, “if a student is absent for any reason for more than 20 percent of the sessions of a course, the student is not eligible for credit in that course. A student who is not present for at least 75 percent of a session of the course is absent from that session.”

## Participation & Preparation:

**Ongoing Assignment:** All students will be select and be assigned a State to investigate and follow during the semester. In addition to specific assigned material for each class, students need to review the Virginia Election Code as well as their assigned state code/regulations to the extent applicable on the election topic focused on that week’s discussion.

The presentation topic will be related to a legal issue within the chosen state’s election laws.

## Use of Technology & AI:

**Open Use Policy:** Students are encouraged to explore generative AI tools in this course, and are authorized to use AI for any purpose during this course except during the final exam. Students must use AI tools responsibly, verify facts presented by AI, disclose when AI tools are used to create course work product, properly cite any AI tools used, and should be prepared to produce the transcript of prompts and responses upon request. Misuse will be treated as a violation of academic standards.

## Use of Electronic Text Books During Exams:

Students are permitted one laptop computer for exam taking purposes. Additional laptop computers or any other electronic data storage devices are not allowed. Electronic text books (e-books) may be used during this class’s exam which is designated as open book/open exam.

Students are responsible for adhering to the instructors' for the examination, which will be included in the examination materials. Again, to be clear, the class exam is open book/open exam and students may access any material (hard copy or electronic), including their own notes, while taking the exam. They may not, however, use any specific artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the exam. This does not mean a student may not "Google" a case cite or topic; it does mean the student may not use a known AI tool, such as "Claude," "ChatGPT," or "Protégé," whether a free or paid version, for any reason or task during the exam.

## Course Schedule & Assignments

Week 1:

**Date: Wednesday, January 21, 2026**

**Topics: The context of Election law & administration; constitutional provisions; the tension between federal, state & local officials; the tensions between uniformity & experimentation and the distinct differences in the election rules and regulations governing each state.**

### **Assignment(s):**

- Read the essays that explain each constitutional provisions referenced below in the Heritage Guide to the Constitution:
- [Sections 4 and 5 of Article I of the U.S. Constitution](#), and Amendments 12,14,15, 17, 20, 22, 23, and 26.
- [Read Virginia Constitution, Article 2, Sections 1-9](#) (you may skip 6-A)
- Virginia Code Sections 24.2-102 through 24.2-123
- Familiarize (do not need to read the filings, but understand the issue(s) before the Supreme Court) for the following cases this term:
- [Watson v Republican National Committee](#)
- [National Republican Senatorial Committee v. Federal Election Commission \(Campaign Finance\) - SCOTUSblog](#)
- [Supreme Court adds four cases to next term's docket - SCOTUSblog](#)
- [Louisiana v Callais](#) (Voting Rights Act)

**Questions to prepare:** why do we have elections? What should be the goals of elections? What is an appropriate ballot question? What is an appropriate ballot length? What should be the goals of election law & procedures? What are the benefits & disadvantages re: uniformity of rules? Who makes the rules? Who should? How is authority divided between the federal and state governments? What offices are elected in Virginia (bonus participation point if you share in class what statewide (non-federal) offices are elected in another state)? Who administers elections in VA (office, not person), including the relevant state and local election officials in the state and their roles in elections (again bonus point answering this question for another state)?

Week 2:

**Date: Monday, January 26, 2026**

**Topics: Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped (VAEHA); National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) & Voter Registration (including Automatic & Universal VR).**

**Assignment(s):**

- Identify the State you would follow. No student may choose the same state as another student – first one to ask will get that state. Make requests to Professor Quinn, who can also provide suggestions.
- Readings Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped, 52 USC Ch. 201.
- Review voter registration in your state's code and Virginia Code, Title 24.2 Chapter 4.
- National Voter Registration Act: 52 USC Ch.205
- Arizona v. Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, 570 U.S. 1 (2013)
- Husted v. A. Philip Randolph Institute, 584 U.S. 756 (2018)
- ACORN v. Edgar, 56 F.3d 791 (7th Cir. 1995)
- Dunn v. Blumstein, 405 U.S. 330 (1972).

**Questions to prepare:** Why do we require voters to register to vote? Why did Congress pass the VAEHA and NVRA? What are the enforcement provisions for these Acts? Does your state have additional criteria regarding disabled accessibility? Who is eligible to vote under federal law? Does your state have additional criteria? How does one register to vote? Be prepared to describe alternative registration procedures, and their positive and negative aspects?

Week 3:

**Date: Monday February 2, 2026**

**Topic: Help America Vote Act; Voting Systems & Internet Voting; Election Day procedures; provisional ballots; "One Person, One Vote."**

**Assignment(s):**

- Virginia Code 24.2-600 et seq. and 24.2-1000 et seq. & your state's code provisions on election day procedures & election crimes.
- Help America Vote Act
- [Part 1](#)
- [Part 2](#)
- Hans von Spakovsky, "[The Dangers of Internet Voting](#)," July 26, 2016.
- [ACE Electoral Knowledge Network](#)

- Read pages 30-40 ([on improving voting equipment issues](#)) of this proposal for improved elections
- NCSL [Electronic Ballot Return](#)

**Questions to Prepare:** Why did Congress pass HAVA? Have the goals been met? Why or why not? What are the benefits/challenges of federalism? What does “one person, one vote” mean? Are we ready for internet voting? Why, or why not? Electronic return of voted ballots is expanding with each election creeping, towards acceptance of losing security and confidentiality. Is this a good or a bad thing?

#### Week 4:

**Date: Monday, February 9, 2026**

**Topics: Political Parties, 3rd Parties & Independent Candidates, Ballot Proposition, Initiative & Referendum; Ballot Access**

#### **Assignment(s):**

- Democratic Party of U.S. v. Wisconsin ex rel. La Follette, 450 U.S. 107 (1981)
- California Democratic Party v. Jones, 530 U.S. 567 (2000)
- Clingman v. Beaver, 544 U.S. 581 (2005);
- A Tale of Two Rulings; Analyzing the Anderson-Burdick Doctrine in Election Emergencies, [A Tale of Two Rulings: Analyzing the Anderson-Burdick Doctrine in Election Emergencies — Columbia Undergraduate Law Review](#), E. Cortez, Dec. 22, 2024.
- [Virginia Code sections 24.2-500 through 24.2-543](#)
- [Virginia Code sections 24.2-684 through 24.2-687](#)
- The laws/rules in your state’s laws/regulations regarding (1) political parties’ roles re: nominations, (2) referenda & ballot initiatives
- View Trump v. Anderson, 601 U.S. 100 (2024).

**Questions to prepare:** What is the process (or processes) for nomination for office? Who can vote to nominate a party candidate? What is the process for independent candidates? What are the appropriate roles of political parties? How does ballot initiative & referendum work? What are the pros and cons?

#### Week 5:

**Date: Monday, February 16, 2026**

**Topics: UOCAVA, Absentee Voting Issue, including vote-by-mail and early voting.**

#### **Assignment(s):**

- Review your state’s code and Virginia Code (Chapter 7) re: absentee voting.

- Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act 52 USC Ch 203
- [McDonald v. Board of Election Commissioners](#), 394 U.S. 802 (1969)

**Questions to prepare** - Why do we allow absentee voting? Is it a right or a privilege? Who is eligible to vote absentee in your state? And in Virginia? How does one vote absentee versus early? How does state & federal law on absentee voting interact?

#### Week 6:

**Date: Monday February 23, 2026**

**Topics: Election Access and Election Integrity; Voter ID; Felon Voting; Non-citizen voting, Bribery**

#### **Assignment(s):**

- Crawford v. Marion County Election Board, 553 U.S. 181 (2008)
- Lee v. Virginia State Board of Elections, 843 F.3d 592 (4th Cir. 2016)
- NAACP v. McCrory, 831 F.3d 204 (4th Cir. 2016)
- Frank v. Walker, 768 F.3d. 744 (7th Cir. 2014)
- Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee, 594 U.S. 647 (2021)
- Non-required reading/review: [Heritage Foundation Election Fraud Database](#).

**Questions to prepare:** What have the courts said about voter ID? How do you define voter fraud and what steps should the Government take to prevent it. Should felons be able to vote? If so, when should their right to vote be restored? What are the advantages and disadvantages of mail voting? Should non-citizens be allowed to vote? What bribery situations do you see in election law?

#### Week 7:

**Date: Monday, March 2, 2026**

**Topics: Voting Rights Act, Sec. 2; Constitutionality of Sec. 5**

#### **Assignment(s):**

- Voting Rights Act of 1965
- [Thornburg v. Gingles](#), 478 U.S. 30 (1986)
- Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee, 594 U.S. 647 (2021)
- Shelby County, Alabama v. Eric Holder, 570 U.S. 529 (2013)

**Questions to prepare:** Why did Congress pass the Voting Rights Act? Has it achieved its purpose? Why was Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act found to be

constitutional when passed? Why did the Supreme Court find it unconstitutional in 2013? Is it still needed today, and if so, why? Do state-level voting and elections changes post-Shelby County need additional federal oversight or enforcement? If Congress enacted a new preclearance mechanism, should it be based on historical or geographic evidence of discrimination in voting or whether a national standard based on recent or current practices should be developed? Are Section 2 nationwide protections adequate? Post Brnovich, what Section 2 changes should be made?

Week 8:

**Date: Monday, March 16, 2026**

**Topic: Voting Rights Act, continued; add'l Redistricting; Voting Rights Act Language Access Provisions (Secs 4(e), 4(f) and 203); Partisan Gerrymandering and Political Competition, Race and Redistricting**

**Assignment(s):**

- Virginia Code Sections & your state's Code regarding redistricting criteria
- [VA Constitution, Art. 2, Sec. 6-A](#)
- Bonus participation for finding your state's the last big redistricting case
- Shaw v. Reno, 509 U.S. 630 (1993)
- Rucho v. Common Cause, 139 S.Ct. 2484 (2019)
- Arizona State Legislature v. Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission, 576 U.S. 787 (2015)
- Evenwel v. Abbott, 136 S.Ct. 1120 (2016)
- Moore v. Harper, 600 U.S. 1 (2023)
- Virginia Code Sections & your state's Code regarding language accessibility and voter accessibility.
- Review the Voting Rights Act Sections 4(e), 4(f) and 203

**Questions to prepare:** How does apportionment work? How do we draw lines for representational districts? What are the appropriate considerations to take into account when drawing district lines? Should legislators be allowed to take race and politics into account in redistricting? What are your state's criteria for redistricting? Why did Congress add the language accessibility provisions? Are the current designations based on the stated purpose? Does your state have additional criteria regarding language accessibility?



Week 9:

**Date: Monday, March 23, 2026**

**Topics: State Campaign Finance; Political Advertising; Federal Campaign Finance**

**Assignment(s):**

- Virginia Code (Chapter 9.2 on Disclosure Requirements for Political Campaign Advertisements), and your state's code on political campaign advertisements.
- Review campaign finance provisions in your state's code and the Virginia Code (Chapter 9 on the Campaign Finance Disclosure Act).
- "[Keep Out: How State Campaign Finance Laws Erect Barriers to Entry for Political Entrepreneurs](#)," Jeffrey Milyo, Institute for Justice (Sept. 2010):
- [Arizona Free Enterprise Club's Freedom PAC v. Bennett](#), 564 U.S. 721 (2011).
- Find the rating for your state on the "[Free Speech Index](#)" at the Institute for Free Speech.

**Questions to prepare:** How does state campaign finance law interact with federal campaign finance law? What are the problems that campaign finance laws are trying to solve? Do the rules take care of the perceived problems? What are alternative methods for dealing with those problems? How do the states differ in their approach to campaign finance laws? Why are there efforts to regulate political advertising? How does the first amendment apply to political advertising?

Week 10:

**Date: Monday, March 30, 2026**

**Topic: - Federal Campaign Finance**

**Assignment(s):**

- [Federal Election Campaign Act and the Federal Election Commission](#).
- "[Understanding Ways to Support Federal Candidates](#)," FEC.
- [Buckley v. Valeo](#), 424 U.S. 1 (1976).
- [McConnell v. FEC](#), 540 U.S. 93 (2003).
- [McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission](#), 572 U.S. 185 (2014).
- [Citizens United v. Fed. Election Comm.](#), 558 U.S. 310 (2010).
- "[Citizens United and the Restoration of the First Amendment](#)," Hans A. von Spakovsky, Heritage Foundation Legal Memorandum No. 50 (Feb. 17, 2010).
- Alec Greven, "[Issue Analysis No. 12: Did Citizens United Harm Political Participation?](#)" Institute For Free Speech (Sept 20, 2021).
- Alec Greven, "[Has Citizens United Increased Corruption? An Examination of Public Corruption Prosecutions](#)," Institute for Free Speech (Sept. 3, 2020).

- [Federal Election Commission passes new digital ad disclosure rule • OpenSecrets](#) T. Giorno, Dec. 1, 2022.

**Questions to prepare:** What are the problems that federal campaign finance laws are trying to solve? Do the rules take care of the perceived problems? What are alternative methods for dealing with those problems? What was Congress trying to accomplish with these federal laws? What unanticipated consequences have resulted from it?

#### Week 11:

**Date: Monday, April 6, 2026**

**Topic: Election Disputes; Recounts & Contests**

#### **Assignment(s):**

- Review your state's code re: recounts & contests and review Virginia Code (Chapter 8 on Recounts and Contests).
- [Bush v. Gore](#), 531 U.S. 98 (2000).
- [Texas v. Pennsylvania](#), Case No. 220155 (U.S. 2020), Motion For Leave to File a Bill of Complaint.

**Questions to prepare:** What kinds of actions are the subjects of election disputes? What are the differences in recounts and contests?

#### Week 12:

**Date: Monday, April 13, 2026**

**Topics:**

- **Class presentations (half)**
- **International Election Law & Democracy**

**Assignment(s):** No preparation needed unless you are presenting.

#### Week 13:

**Date: Monday, April 20, 2026**

**Topics:**

- **Class presentations (half)**
- **Equal Protection, Bush v. Gore legacy, counting the votes; election litigation, and the changing strategies of political parties & candidates**

**Assignment(s):** No preparation needed unless you are presenting.

## Student Resources

[Antonin Scalia Law School Academic Regulations](#)

[GMU Common Course Policies Addendum](#)

[Mason Square Services](#)

[Mason Square Police](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room 110

Emergency - Dial 911

Escort Services - 703-993-8070

Dispatch – 703-993-2810

[Student Support and Advocacy Center \(SSAC\)](#)

Mason Square Sexual Assault Services:

Van Metre Hall, Room 222D

703-993-8186

Notice of Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Interpersonal Violence, and Stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If a student wishes to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703 -993-2380. Students may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

[Mason Square Clinic](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room B102

703-991-2831

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Disability Services](#)

[Student Conduct](#)

[University Life](#)