

POL SCI 250 – Law and Society
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Fall 2014 - ONLINE

Professor Zach Wallander

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This online course is designed to provide you with a broad overview of American legal traditions, institutions, and processes. You will read about topics related to the nature of law, the organization of law, legal theory, and the role of courts, judges, juries, and lawyers. By the end of the semester you should have a greater understanding of the interplay that exists between the law and society.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Samuels, Suzanne. 2006. *Law, Politics, and Society*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company (now Cengage Learning).

CLASS CONDUCT

Talking about law and society requires us to discuss potentially sensitive issues. Therefore, you must always maintain a professional tone in all online postings. You may challenge the ideas of your peers, but discussion forums (described below) are NOT for personal attacks or non-scholarly commentary. Being disrespectful to your fellow classmates or the instructor will not be tolerated. Please take the time to convey your ideas in a thoughtful and respectful manner. Failure to do so will result in a significant deduction in your discussion postings grade.

CLASS STRUCTURE

We will not meet face-to-face. This class will be conducted exclusively online via Desire2Learn (D2L). This course will be structured on a weekly basis. A given week begins on Monday at 12:00am (with the exception of Week 1) and ends on Sunday at 11:59pm. Note that the official time zone utilized for this online class is Central Standard Time (CST).

READINGS AND FRAMING NOTES

You are expected to complete all assigned readings. Many of the assigned readings will come from the Samuels text. However, there will be some readings outside the course text. Readings not from the course text will be clearly noted in the topic and reading schedule (see below) and available via the D2L site (under the “Content” section).

I will also post framing notes for the assigned readings associated with that week of class. These notes will be posted under “Content” on our D2L page and will highlight themes, issues, and

concepts associated with our reading for that week. The notes will be available for your review by Monday evening of each week.

Make sure you check the course D2L website frequently. Any changes made to the reading schedule, along with special announcements, will be posted here.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND POSTINGS

With the exception of those weeks in which you are taking the mid-term or final examination, as well as the week of Thanksgiving break, I will post one discussion question in the “Weekly Discussion” section of our D2L course page (under the “Discussion” section) that is based on that week’s assigned reading. Each student will be **REQUIRED** to respond directly to the question that I pose each week.

Think of these posts as short essay assignments. Your responses should be approximately two paragraphs (single-spaced). These weekly posts will be assigned one of three grades (0, 75, or 100%). In order to receive 100%, you must submit a response that thoroughly answers all parts of the question, is free of grammatical and spelling errors, is of a scholarly nature with a highly professional tone, and does not veer from the topic of the question posed. Bullet points will not suffice. You must write full sentences in paragraph form. Any reference to the assigned or outside reading must be properly cited with in-text parenthetical citations, and a references list should follow the body of the post, if applicable. I suggest that you type your posts using a word processing program and then copy and paste your remarks into D2L. Do not post your response as an attachment.

Your regular weekly discussion responses must be posted no later than Sunday at 11:59pm of the relevant week of the discussion. For example, regular weekly discussion responses for week 2 should be posted no later than Sunday, September 14 at 11:59pm. You should submit only one direct response to the weekly discussion question for grading purposes each week. If you submit two responses to the question, I will grade the first post only. Late responses (even by one minute) to the weekly discussion questions will be assigned a grade of zero.

REACTIONS TO THE POSTS OF OTHER STUDENTS

In at least two separate weeks this semester, you must also post a response (approximately one paragraph, single-spaced) to a weekly discussion posting of another student. Your reaction post should take the point your peer expressed in his or her weekly discussion post and elaborate on it or critique it in some way (positive critique is welcome). You may react and respond to multiple postings in a given week, and you may respond to more than two student postings over the semester, however, I will only grade one of your reactions per week and a total of two reaction posts per student this semester. Thus, you must indicate which of your reaction posts you would like graded. In order to do this, you should include “I submit this reaction post to be graded” in the first line of the text (not the subject line) in your reaction post. Responses to student postings are due no later than Sunday at 11:59pm of the relevant week of the discussion. In the event that you submit more than two reaction posts over the semester and do not indicate which two you

want graded, I will grade the first two reactions (across separate weeks). Reaction posts will be assigned one of three grades (0, 75, or 100%). You must seriously engage the comments of another student in a meaningful and clear way (i.e., you provide a well-developed response that is free of spelling and grammatical errors) to receive full credit (i.e., 100%). Late reaction posts will not be accepted and will receive a grade of zero.

EXAMS

There will be two exams in this course – a mid-term exam and a final exam. Exam material will be drawn from the assigned reading and the discussion forums. Both exams will include a series of multiple choice and true/false questions and will be administered through our D2L web page under the “Quizzes” section in a timed setting.

The mid-term exam will be available online beginning Monday, October 27 at 12:00am until Sunday, November 2 at 11:59pm. You may select the day and time in which you take the exam within this time frame, but you are strongly advised to give yourself the full amount of time that I will permit in order to complete the exam.

The final exam will be available online beginning Saturday, December 13 at 12:00am until Saturday, December 20 at 11:59pm. Please note that the final exam will not be cumulative in nature. I will emphasize material covered since the mid-term examination.

Each exam can be found under the “Quizzes” section of our D2L web page. Once you begin the exam, the clock begins, and you will have to complete the exam within a designated time limit. Thus, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have a secure Internet connection before you begin the exam. Moreover, you will have a very limited amount of time to answer each question. Consequently, you should prepare for these online exams as you would a closed-book exam in a regular classroom environment. The exams are designed so that you will not have time to consult your notes or the book.

Make-up exams will only be given to students who have a medical excuse, University-excused absence, or other reasonable excuse (as determined by me). To qualify for a make-up examination, students must provide documentation that demonstrates that you were not able to take the exam during the time frame offered and must contact me prior to the scheduled exam. If a student cannot contact me prior, the student is required to contact me within 24 hours after the last scheduled day of the exam.

GRADES

Discussion Postings (weekly and reaction posts)	30%
Mid-term Exam	35%
Final Exam	35%

GRADING SCALE

The grading scale is as follows*:

100 – 93	A	77 – 73	C
92 – 90	A-	72 – 70	C-
89 – 88	B+	69 – 68	D+
87 – 83	B	67 – 63	D
82 – 80	B-	62 – 60	D-
79 – 78	C+	59 – 0	F

* The instructor reserves the right to curve grades, should the need present itself.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated in this class. Anyone found guilty of cheating or plagiarism or of any other violation of academic integrity will be assigned an automatic grade of F *IN THE COURSE* and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent through University channels. Notes on plagiarism can be found here: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>. UWM's policy can be found here: http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm. Be sure you know the definition and know how to avoid it. **I am absolutely serious about this policy.**

STUDENT ACCOMODATIONS

Any students with special needs due to a physical or learning disability should see me as soon as possible. Every effort will be made to accommodate your needs. See www.sac.uwm.edu for more information or contact the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) counselor on campus (414) 229-6287.

SYLLABUS LINKS

Information regarding policies on students with disabilities, religious observances, students called to active military duty, incompletes, discriminatory conduct, academic misconduct, complaint procedures, grade appeal procedures, and final exam schedule requirements can be found here: <http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf>

For writing assistance, please contact the UWM writing center by phone (229-4339) or online (www.writingcenter.uwm.edu). The writing center also has a number of writing resources available (<http://www4.uwm.edu/writingcenter/Resources.htm>).

TOPIC & READING SCHEDULE

*This reading schedule is subject to change
Changes will be posted on the D2L course website*

Week 1 – Beginning September 2: Introduction to the course, course objectives, and policies

-No assigned reading

-Students are required to post a brief introduction by Sunday, September 7 on D2L

Week 2 – Beginning September 8: Introduction to the study of law – Read Samuels pgs. 1-26

Week 3 – Beginning September 15: Legal theory – Read Samuels pgs. 28-56

Week 4 – Beginning September 22: Major legal systems and types of law – Read Samuels pgs. 85-106

Week 5 – Beginning September 29: Foundations of the U.S. legal system – Read Samuels pgs. 57-83

Week 6 – Beginning October 6: Structure of the U.S. court system – Read Samuels pgs. 135-154

Week 7 – Beginning October 13: Judges, legal reasoning, and judicial decision making I – Read J. Frank's, "The Judging Process and the Judge's Personality," reprinted in Bonsignore et al., 2006. *Before the Law: An Introduction to the Legal Process*, Eighth Edition, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. (on D2L)

Week 8 – Beginning October 20: Judges, legal reasoning, and judicial decision making II – L. Fuller. 1949. "The Case of the Speluncean Explorers." *Harvard Law Review* 62: 616-645. (on D2L)

Week 9 – Beginning October 27: Mid-Term Exam

-No assigned reading

-No weekly discussion post

-The mid-term exam will be available online beginning Monday, October 27 at 12:00am until Sunday, November 2 at 11:59pm.

Week 10 – Beginning November 3: Participants in the American Judicial System – Read Samuels pgs. 154-167

Week 11 – Beginning November 10: The Function of American Courts – Read Samuels pgs. 169-192

Week 12 – Beginning November 17: Law, Race, and Ethnicity – Read Samuels pgs. 265-287

Week 13 – Beginning November 24 (week of Thanksgiving)

-No assigned reading

-No weekly discussion post

Week 14 – Beginning December 1: Law and Gender – Read Samuels pgs. 290-312

Week 15 – Beginning December 8: Law and Medicine – Read Samuels pgs. 336-354

-Discussion post must be completed by December 11 (last day of classes).

Week 16 - FINAL EXAM

-No assigned reading

-No weekly discussion post

-The final exam will be available online beginning Saturday, December 13 at 12:00am until Saturday, December 20 at 11:59pm.