

Genesee Community College POS 105: Rights, Liberties, and Justice

3 credit hours

Prerequisites: none

Instructor: Mrs. Sawler (SAW-ler)

POS 105 is the exploration of the United States Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the pivotal role of the U.S. Supreme Court in shaping the nation's legal landscape. This course equips students with the knowledge and skills necessary to comprehend, analyze, and engage with landmark Supreme Court decisions. By delving into the historical development of the Court and its significant cases, students will gain an understanding of the function of the American Supreme Court. This course offers an examination of the Supreme Court's role in interpreting the Constitution and shaping American legal principles. By engaging with real case materials, students will gain the critical thinking and analytical skills necessary to participate in informed discussions about the Constitution and its application in contemporary society.

Course Materials:

Constitutional Law for a Changing America: Rights, Liberties, and Justice, 10th Edition

CQ Press 2019

Lee Epstein and Thomas G. Walker

Access to Fox News and CNN/MSNBC and USA Today Newspaper prior to class each week.

Course Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Explain the rights specified in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
2. Trace the historical development of the U.S. Supreme Court.
3. Access the full-text of a Supreme Court opinion (print and digital) given a citation of the case.
4. Summarize a Supreme Court opinion in the form of a brief.
5. Analyze a selected Supreme Court case using different interpretive modes (originalism, textualism, precedent, doctrinalism, structuralism, etc.).
6. Discuss Supreme Court cases in any of the major areas of constitutional law (economic rights and American capitalism, capitalism, freedom of speech, freedom from and of religion, rights of the criminally accused, privacy rights, and equal protection rights).

Learning Activities and Assignments

Your learning in this course is structured around 3 types of assignments or activities: case briefs, journal analysis assignments, and final reflection paper. The purpose of these assignments is to help you practice and apply the Constitutional concepts and reasoning skills you are learning with multiple and frequent opportunities for feedback and revision.

Case Briefs – due each week at the beginning of class

The Supreme Court Case Brief assignment is designed to develop your skills in legal analysis, critical thinking, and concise writing. In this assignment, you will delve into a significant Supreme Court case, distill its key elements, and present a clear and informative case brief that summarizes the case's main aspects. Your case brief will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Accuracy and completeness in summarizing the case.
- Clarity and organization of the brief's structure.
- Insightful analysis of the case's legal significance and implications.
- Proper citation and referencing of sources.
- Adherence to the prescribed word count and format requirements.

This assignment type can be revised and resubmitted once per case brief.

Journal Analysis/In-Class Reflection: Current Events and Constitutional Concepts – at the end of each class

This in-class assignment is designed to foster a deeper understanding of how constitutional law is relevant to the world around us. It encourages you to actively participate in class discussions and apply the constitutional principles learned to real-world scenarios. Stay engaged, ask questions, and share your insights during the class sessions. The goal is to deepen your understanding of how constitutional law applies to real-world situations and to encourage active participation in class discussions.

Your in-class reflection will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Active and thoughtful participation in class discussions.
- The quality and depth of your reflections, including your understanding of constitutional concepts.
- The clarity and relevance of your analysis of current events.
- Engagement with your classmates' ideas and questions.

Because of the participatory nature of this assignment, this type of assignment may not be redone or resubmitted, but the lowest graded analysis will be dropped from your overall grade.

Reflection Paper – due week 14 at the beginning of class

This final reflection paper is an opportunity to demonstrate your comprehensive understanding of constitutional law and your capacity to apply this knowledge to real-world situations. It's a chance to showcase your intellectual growth and how you envision utilizing your understanding of constitutional law in the future. The Final Reflection Paper serves as a culminating assignment, drawing from your experiences and insights gained throughout the semester in POS 105 - Constitutional Law and the U.S. Supreme Court. This paper offers you the opportunity to synthesize your understanding of constitutional concepts, Supreme Court cases, and their relevance to contemporary issues.

Your reflection paper will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Thorough and thoughtful reflection on the course material.
- Clarity and organization in presenting your ideas.
- Effective analysis of the Supreme Court case, in-class discussions, and current events.
- Connection between personal growth and course content.

Grades and Related Policies

This course presents intellectual challenges that encourage you to approach learning from fresh perspectives while developing and applying intricate knowledge and skills. Its design is tailored to support your success, and as your instructor, my aim is to provide you with the necessary resources for your achievements. If you encounter difficulties with any particular skill or concept, do not hesitate to inform me so that I can offer alternative explanations or approaches.

There are 660 points that can be earned in this course. These points allow you the flexibility to make mistakes and still earn the grade that you are striving for. Learning requires making mistakes and learning from those mistakes and I want you to be able to try, make mistakes, and try again with the goal of improving over time. The points awarded for each assignment type are:

Case Briefs	12 briefs @ 25 pts. each	300 pts	45.5%
Journal Analysis/Reflections	12 Journal entries @ 20 pts each	300 pts	45.5%
Reflection Paper	1 paper @ 100 pts.	100 pts	9.1 %
<i>total</i>		<i>660 pts</i>	<i>100%</i>

According to the AS&E Grading Scheme, your letter grade equivalent is:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	E
>594	554- 594	495- 553	429 - 494	363 - 428	297 - 362	231 - 296	165 - 230	99 - 164	0 - 98

Grading can be a complex endeavor. To address the many considerations of the classroom environment and to underscore the principles of fairness, adaptability, and empathy, I've formulated the following grading guidelines. If you ever have any questions or concerns about these policies, I encourage you to engage in a conversation with me.

Late Work:

The completion of assignments by their due dates is of utmost importance in this course, as it ensures that we can engage in meaningful discussions during our class sessions. However, I recognize that unforeseen circumstances can occasionally disrupt your schedule. To strike a balance between the importance of timely completion and understanding that life can present challenges, I have developed the following late assignment policy.

Late Assignment Policy:

In-Class Assignments: In-class assignments are an integral part of our discussions, and it is highly encouraged that they are completed during the class session, although they will be accepted at the beginning of the following class. If you happen to miss a class, you are still required to complete the in-class assignment and submit it at the beginning of the next class. There will be no penalty for late in-class assignments.

One Assignment Grace: Each student is allowed one late submission for an out-of-class assignment without any penalty. This one-time grace is designed to accommodate unforeseen or exceptional circumstances. The assignment can be turned in late without any grade deduction.

All Other Late Assignments: For any subsequent out-of-class assignments that are turned in late, a 25% penalty will be applied to the grade. This penalty is meant to reflect the importance of timely submissions while still providing some flexibility for unexpected challenges.

Note:

It is important to communicate with me if you anticipate or experience difficulties in meeting assignment deadlines. Open and timely communication allows for a better understanding of your situation and, when appropriate, can lead to reasonable accommodations.

Remember that the objective of this policy is to encourage a balance between the rigors of the course and the challenges life may present. I encourage you to complete assignments on time whenever possible and use the one-time grace judiciously. If you have any questions or concerns about this policy, please do not hesitate to reach out for clarification or to discuss your specific situation. Your success and well-being are important, and I am here to support you in your academic journey.

REJI welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. If you have a disability or condition that inhibits your ability to equitably participate in this course, please let me or REJI staff know, and we will do our best to find a solution. For example, please notify us if you have difficulty seeing or hearing in certain conditions, if you have or suspect you have a learning disability or a unique learning style like dyslexia or ADHD, or if you experience unusual anxiety around exams or public speaking. Please also let us know of any events that interfere with your participation, including events at the facility such as unusual confinement to your cell, legal proceedings, or personal and family situations.

Revise and Resubmit:

If you receive a grade below a 3 on case briefs, you may revise and resubmit one time per case brief for a higher grade to encourage improvement and mastery of the material.

Plagiarism and Cheating: Cheating is obtaining or intentionally giving unauthorized information to create an unfair advantage in examination, assignment, or classroom situation. Plagiarism is the act of presenting and claiming words, idea, data, programming code or creations of others as one's own. Plagiarism may be intentional - as in the false claim of authorship – or unintentional – as in a failure to document information sources using MLA (Modern Language Association), APA (American Psychological Association), Chicago Style or other style sheets or manuals adopted by the instructors at the College. Presenting ideas in the exact or near exact wording as found in source material constitutes plagiarism, as does patching together paraphrased statements without proper citation. Disciplinary action may include a failing grade on an assignment or test, a failing grade for the course, suspension, or expulsion from the college, as described in the Student Code of Conduct at www.genesee.edu/assets/file/policies/GCC_Student_Code_of_Conduct.pdf.

Course Timeline

Week/Date	Topic	Materials	Due at the beginning of class
<i>Week 1: Friday February 16th</i>	<i>Introduction & Class Community Agreements Syllabus Where do our rights come from? What is liberty? What is justice?</i>	<i>Syllabus Case Brief template Case Brief Rubric Notes Textbook</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Week 2: Friday February 23rd</i>	<i>Understanding the Supreme Court: Process and Interpretation</i>	<i>See above Reading Notes</i>	<i>Read Chapter 1: pgs 9-42 <u>Constitutional Law for a Changing America: Rights, Liberties, and Justice</u></i>
<i>Week 3: Friday March 8</i>	<i>Institutional Power and Constraint: The Judiciary & Marbury vs. Madison</i>	<i>See above Reading notes</i>	<i>Read Chapter 2: pgs 43-64 <u>Constitutional Law for a Changing America: Rights, Liberties, and Justice</u></i>

		<i>Case Brief: Marbury vs Madison</i>	<i>DUE: Case Brief: Marbury vs Madison</i>
<i>Week 4: Friday March 15</i>	<i>Bill of Rights & The Incorporation of the Bill of Rights (14th Amendment)</i>	<i>See above Reading notes Case Brief</i>	<i>Read Chapter 3: pgs 65-86 <u>Constitutional Law for a Changing America: Rights, Liberties, and Justice</u> DUE: Case Brief: choose one case in the chapter for case brief</i>
<i>Week 5: Friday March 22</i>	<i>Civil Liberties: Freedom of Speech, Assembly, and Association</i>	<i>See above Reading notes Case Brief</i>	<i>Chapter 5: 183-278 All read 183-top of 203. 203-278 read assigned section only. Due: case brief (you will be assigned a case)</i>
<i>Week 6: Friday March 29</i>	<i>Freedom of Press and Expression</i>	<i>See above Reading notes Case Brief</i>	<i>All read pgs:280-290 & 296-301 Chapter 7:307-353 (your assigned section only) Due: Case brief (you will be assigned a case)</i>
<i>Week 7: Friday April 5</i>	<i>Privacy and Personal Liberty</i>	<i>See above Reading notes Case Brief</i>	<i>All read pgs 365- 369 and 374. Chapter 9: 365-426 (your assigned section only) Due: Case brief (you will be assigned a case)</i>
<i>Week 12: Friday April 12th</i>	<i>Investigations and Evidence</i>	<i>See above Reading notes Case Brief</i>	<i>All read 428- 435. Chapter 10: 427-496 (your assigned section only) Due: Case brief (you will be assigned a case)</i>
<i>Week 13: Friday April 19th</i>	<i>Attorneys, Trials, and Punishments</i>	<i>See above Reading notes Case Brief</i>	<i>All read 497-502 and 507-511. Chapter 11: 497-553 (your assigned section only)</i>

			<i>Due: Case brief (you will be assigned a case)</i>
<i>Week 14: Friday April 26th</i>	<i>Race Discrimination and the Foundations or Equal Protection</i>	<i>See above Reading notes Case Brief</i>	<i>All read 556-566 Chapter 12: 556-600 (your assigned section only) Due: Case brief (you will be assigned a case)</i>
<i>Week 12: Friday May 3rd</i>	<i>Contemporary theories of justice</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Week 13: Friday May 10th</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>Final Reflection Paper</i>	<i>Due: Final Reflection Paper</i>