PLSC 2820 – Civil Rights and Liberties
Course Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Jeffrey Lyons
Email: Jeffrey.Lyons51@du.edu
Office: Sturm Hall, Room 473
Office Hours: Wednesday 10:00-12:00, and by appointment
Time: 4:00-5:50 PM
Location: Sturm Hall, Room 187

The focus of this class will be on the law, specifically on how seminal Supreme Court cases have shaped the protections that citizens have from government, and the ways in which the government treats the people. We will explore topics such as individual protection from government intrusion, the rights of the accused, equality and equal protection, and discrimination. Through the course you will learn not only factual information about our legal system and what explains the legal outcomes that we observe today, but also will learn to critically apply legal principles and precedent to civil rights and liberties issues facing the country today.

Required Text


Grading

Your grade for this class is comprised of the following components:

Attendance/Participation (15%)- Being present in class and participating regularly is essential for success in this class. It is important that you share your ideas and ask any questions that you may have. I take participation seriously – this is not a guaranteed A.

Discussion Leadership (5%)- You will be required for leading discussion for a small portion of one day with several of your classmates. You will be assigned a day of the term where you and 2-3 classmates will be responsible for leading discussion on the days materials. You will need to write 5 well thought out discussion questions about the readings for the day. I need to have these emailed to me by 5 PM the night before the class you have signed up for, and have a hard copy turned in at the beginning of class. You will be graded on the quality of discussion that is generated and the preparation that was done.

Midterm Exam (35%)- Exam will be on October 14th.

Final Exam (35%)- Exam will be on November 18th.

Quizzes (10%)- There will be several unannounced quizzes over the quarter. There will be at least three and no more than five. They are meant to test your reading comprehension. If you did the reading, they will be easy, if you didn’t, they will be hard. They will be given at the beginning of class and there are no makeups if you are not present to take them.
Final Grades will be based on the following distribution, though please note that I reserve the right to curve point totals should I decide that is necessary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>&gt;93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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A: Designates student performance of an extraordinarily high level, indicates a comprehensive understanding of course material, and reflects original insight and thought.

B: Designates student performance of a high level, indicates a thorough understanding of course material, and reflects solid insight and well-considered thought.

C: Designates student performance that completely fulfills the basic requirements of the course, indicates a basic understanding of course material, and reflects basic insights and a surface-level understanding of concepts.

D: Designates student performance that mostly fulfills the basic requirements of the course, indicates a basic or weak understanding of course material, and reflects poor, basic, or weak insights and a poor understanding of concepts.

F: Designates student performance that fails to fulfill the basic requirements of the course, indicates a weak or inaccurate understanding of course material, and reflects poor or misinformed insights and a lack of understanding of concepts.

**Administrative Policies**

Late Work: Late assignments will not be accepted.

E-Mail and Web Communication: An email list has been setup to contact you with class updates, additional readings, and questions you might consider while reading. It is critical that you regularly check your DU email account and Canvass for updates. Students will be held accountable for assignments and syllabus changes communicated via email. I will always give you reasonable notice for any changes or additions to the syllabus.
The Classroom Environment: Tardiness, early departures, ringing phones, etc. detract from the learning environment. Therefore, I ask that students arrive on time and remain in class for the duration of the period. Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices when you enter the classroom. While the use of a computer for note-taking is certainly encouraged, web surfing, text-messaging, emailing, etc. not only reduces your engagement and comprehension of the material during class, but is highly distracting for the students around you. Please do not participate in these activities during class.

Academic Integrity: I take issues of academic integrity very seriously. Plagiarism and other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. All work is expected to be original, and not previously or simultaneously turned in for credit in another course. All forms of academic dishonesty will result in an F for the course.

Disability Services: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please contact me about this during the first week of the class so that I can prepare to make accommodations ahead of time.

Religious Accommodations: University policy grants students excused absences from class or other organized activities or observance of religious holy days, unless the accommodation would create an undue hardship. Faculty are asked to be responsive to requests when students contact them in advance to request such an excused absence. Students are responsible for completing assignments given during their absence, but should be given an opportunity to make up work missed because of religious observance. Once a student has registered for a class, the student is expected to examine the course syllabus for potential conflicts with holy days and to notify the instructor by the end of the first week of classes of any conflicts that may require an absence (including any required additional preparation/travel time). The student is also expected to remind the faculty member in advance of the missed class, and to make arrangements in advance (with the faculty member) to make up any missed work or in-class material within a reasonable amount of time.

Classroom Behavior: Students and faculty each have a responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction, Constitution, Supreme Court Basics

9/9: Introduction to the course. Overview of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.
       Readings: E&W Part I.

9/11: Understanding the U.S. Supreme Court
Readings: E&W Chapter 1.

**Week 2: Powers and Checks on the Judiciary, Incorporation**

9/16: Institutional Powers of the Courts

Readings: E&W Chapter 2.

9/18: Incorporation

Readings: E&W Chapter 3.

**Week 3: Freedom of Religion**

9/23: Free Exercise

Readings: E&W Chapter 4 (pgs. 89-127)

9/25: Establishment

Readings: E&W Chapter 4 (pgs. 128-195)

**Week 4: Freedom of Speech, Assembly, and Association**

9/30: Development of Standards and Contemporary Tests

Readings: E&W Chapter 5 (pgs. 197-225)

10/2: Content and Contexts

Readings: E&W Chapter 5 (pgs. 230-296)

**Week 5: Freedom of the Press, Boundaries of Expression**

10/7: Freedom of the Press

Readings: E&W Chapter 6

10/9: Boundaries of Free Expression

Readings: E&W Chapter 7

**Week 6: Midterm, Exam Discussion, First Amendment and the Internet**

10/14: **Midterm Exam**

10/16: First Amendment and the Internet
Readings: E&W Chapter 8
Additional Readings TBA

Week 7: Right to Bear Arms, Right to Privacy

10/21: Right to Keep and Bear Arms

Readings: E&W Chapter 9
Ongoing cases: NRA v. BATFE, Drake v. Filco, New York State Rifle and Pistol Association v. City of New York

10/23: Right to Privacy

Readings: E&W Chapter 10

Week 8: Rights of the Accused, continued

10/28: Investigations and Evidence

Readings: E&W Chapter 11

10/30: Attorneys, Trials, and Punishments

Readings: E&W Chapter 12

Week 9: Civil Rights – Discrimination

11/4: Racial Discrimination

Readings: E&W Chapter 13 (pgs. 611-651)

11/6: Sex, Sexual Orientation, Economic Status, Remedying Effects

Readings: E&W Chapter 13 (pgs. 652-718)

Week 10: Civil Rights – Voting and Representation

11/11: Voting and Representation

Readings: E&W Chapter 14

11/13: Contemporary Issues and Looking to the Future

Readings: TBA

Final Exam: 11/18, 4:00-5:50 PM in Sturm Hall, Room 187