

University of Arkansas – Fort Smith 5210 Grand Avenue
P. O. Box 3649
Fort Smith, AR 72913–3649
479–788–7000

General Syllabus

PLSC 31433 The United States Supreme Court

Credit Hours: 3

Lecture Hours: 3

Laboratory Hours: 0

Prerequisite: PLSC 27533 American National Government

Effective Catalog: 2019-2020

I. Course Information

A. Catalog Description

Study of the United States Supreme Court and constitutional interpretation.

B. Additional Information

This course will be used as an upper level option for the Minor in Political Science.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

A. Subject Matter

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Describe the original constitutional jurisdictions of the Supreme Court.
2. Identify those justices who have significantly changed the direction of the court.
3. Offer discourse on the evolution of the power of judicial review.
4. Describe the political processes of selecting Supreme Court justices.
5. Identify the components of the modern judicial branch.
6. Demonstrate knowledge of how constitutional interpretation has changed.

B. University Learning Outcomes

This course enhances student abilities in the following areas:

Analytical Skills

Critical Thinking Skills Goal:

Students will identify the key aspects of the U.S. Supreme Court as an institution.

Students will research, evaluate, and compare information from varying sources in order to evaluate authority, accuracy, recency, and bias relevant to the constitutional

role of the U.S. Supreme Court. They will assess and justify the solutions to and/or analysis of issues associated with the functioning of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Quantitative Reasoning Goal

Students will apply appropriate statistical models to understand the actions of Supreme Court Justices. Students will represent statistical information symbolically, visually, numerically and verbally and will interpret models and data in order to draw inferences on the opinions of Supreme Court Justices. Students will recognize the limitations of quantitative analysis.

Communication Skills (written and oral)

Students will develop the ability to proficiently articulate and defend their opinion in front of their peers. Students will use a formal documentation style for written presentation of research projects. Students will discuss particular aspects of court development and judicial actions in their writing. They will compose coherent documents appropriate to get their points across to the class and to the instructor. Students will effectively communicate orally in a public setting.

Ethical Decision Making

Students will model ethical decision-making processes that Supreme Court Justices often face while making decisions on ethically challenging court cases.

Students will identify ethical dilemmas that Supreme Court Justices often face. Students will apply ethical frameworks to resolve a variety of ethical dilemmas associated with being a Supreme Court Justice.

Global and Cultural Perspectives

Students will reflect upon the peculiar structure of the U.S. Supreme Court and its implications for consuming analyzing the judicial branch of the government of other countries. Besides, students will demonstrate understanding of the impact of the Supreme Court's decisions on domestic and international policy. They will demonstrate understanding of the U.S. Supreme Court in a global environment as well as how the U.S. Supreme Court impacts or is impacted by different political cultures.

III. Major Course Topics

- A. The constitutional jurisdictions of the Supreme Court.
- B. Major early decisions and the expansion of judicial review powers.
- C. Court relations with Congress and the President.
- D. Changing interpretations of civil liberties and civil rights.
- E. Selection and confirmation of justices.
- F. The structure of the modern judicial branch.
- G. The political nature of the Supreme Court.

H. The mark of the Supreme Court's decisions on domestic and international policy.