

# POLS 225: Judicial Process

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**Professor:** Marcus E. Green

**Office:** Towers 216

**Office Hours:** MWF 12:30-1:30 or by  
appointment

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**Email:** mgreen@otterbein.edu

**Quarter:** Spring 2010 | Mar 29 – Jun 9

**Section #:** 01

**Schedule #:** 20597

**Class Time:** MWF 9:30–10:50

**Location:** Towers 121

**Website:** access through Blackboard

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## Course Description

Political Science 225 analyzes the role of federal and state courts as political institutions, with special attention to the roles of judges and lawyers in the judicial process. Civil and criminal courts are studied, as well as judicial norms and procedures.

## Course Objectives and Learning Goals

1. To develop an understanding of the judicial process in the United States
2. To develop an understanding of the US court system
3. To develop an understanding of law and legal reasoning
4. To help students decide whether to go to law school

## Required Texts

1. Lawrence Baum, *American Courts: Process and Policy*, 6th Edition. Houghton Mifflin / Wadsworth Publishing, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-0618522842
2. Lief Carter and Tom Burke, *Reason in Law*, 8th Edition. Longman/Pearson, 2010. ISBN-13: 978-0205745395

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## Exams, Attendance, & Grading Criteria

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### Exams

The course includes two exams and a final exam. Exam dates are noted below and in the reading schedule. Each exam consists of questions drawn from the readings and lectures. At the end of the semester, students will be allowed to drop their lowest exam score. The final exam is scheduled according to the college's final exam schedule. The final covers material in the last section of the course and some comprehensive material. Because students can drop their lowest exam grade, none of the exams will be curved.

### Make-up Exam Policy

There are no make-up exams. As noted above, you will be able to drop your lowest exam grade at the end of the semester. Therefore, if you miss an exam and receive a zero, you can drop that grade at the end of the semester. Because of this policy, no make-up exams will be given.

### Attendance & Class Participation

Attendance is required but you are not graded for it. You are permitted up to 3 unexcused absences without penalty. After your third unexcused absence, I will deduct .1 point from your final grade average points for each additional absence. For example, 4 absences = -7 points; 5 absences = -14 points, etc.

If you need to miss more than three classes for college approved reasons, please see me to make arrangements. Sickness short of hospitalization or incapacitation does not constitute grounds for an excused absence. I may make exceptions for truly unusual and unanticipated events, but such arrangements must be discussed with me. Colds, flus, hangovers, broken bones, dental work, doctor appointments, changes in work schedules, etc. do not count as either unusual or unanticipated. You are permitted three unexcused absences to deal with such events.

I reserve the right to reduce your grade by 1 point for each instance of tardiness.

**Extra Credit:** If students who have not missed more than three class meetings regularly participate in class discussions, I will add up to seven points to their final grade. Students that regularly disrupt the course by talking or texting can lose points.

### Exam Dates & Final Grade Calculation

Exams	Date	Points	
Exam 1	Wed, April 21	100	
Exam 2	Wed, May 12	100	
Final Exam	Tues, June 8, 8:00-10:00	150	
	<b>Subtract lowest Exam grade</b>	<b>-100</b>	subtract your lowest Exam grade
	<b>Total Possible Points</b>	<b>250</b>	
	<b>Attendance &amp; Participation</b>	<b>+/- 7</b>	Students with more than 3 absences can lose 7 points or more.

### Grade Scale

The calculation of the final grade will follow the grade scale below with 250 points possible.

Grade	Percent	Points
A	93-100	232-250
A-	90-92	225-231
B+	87-89	217-224
B	83-86	207-216
B-	80-82	200-205
C+	77-79	192-199
C	73-76	182-191
C-	70-72	175-181
D+	67-69	167-174
D	60-66	150-166
F	0-59	0-149

This grading system follows Otterbein's 100% grade scale found in the College Catalog: <http://catalog.otterbein.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=213#Grading>

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## Course Policies

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### Course Format

Class meetings will be largely organized around lectures. The lectures are designed to provide students with a framework of meaning through which they are better able to understand and discuss the course material. Class discussions will be based upon readings from the required texts. The discussions shall provide students with a forum in which they can discuss and debate the key concepts of the texts under review with their classmates and the instructor.

### Lectures and Readings

Students are responsible for knowing the material covered in the assigned readings and the material covered in lectures. Lectures will address information found in the readings as well as information not found in the readings. I do not distribute my lecture notes to students. Therefore, students are encouraged to attend class and to take notes.

## **Classroom Environment**

Class discussions are designed to challenge your verbal communicative skills, which are, in my view, not only necessary to the learning process but vital to the development of democratic culture and citizenship. The public exchange of ideas requires skill. It requires a level of confidence to speak in front of others and a level of maturity and respect to listen to others. Our discussions will be similar to workshops in which we workout different thoughts and ideas in coordination with one another. Because of this, I will work to make the classroom environment respectful and comfortable for all, and I expect you to do the same.

## **Blackboard**

I will distribute course materials on Blackboard. Therefore, it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with Blackboard and to login periodically for course updates.

## **Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty**

Otterbein policies regarding academic integrity will be strictly enforced. All submitted work must be your own. I will investigate indications of copied or plagiarized work, and I reserve the right to administer an oral exam and to question the student, if I suspect a student has submitted work that may be plagiarized.

According to the Otterbein Campus Life Handbook, “any use of the words or ideas of someone else as though they were the student’s own words, constitutes plagiarism. This definition applies to the use of both printed and unprinted sources, including the work of other students or faculty.” (See: [http://www.otterbein.edu/CLH/code\\_of\\_conduct\\_policies.asp#sec\\_4](http://www.otterbein.edu/CLH/code_of_conduct_policies.asp#sec_4) ). I will report violations of academic dishonesty to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. According to Otterbein policy, students who violate standards of academic integrity are subject to disciplinary sanctions, which include the “failure on the given assignment or a failing grade for the course.”

## **Disability Accommodation**

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact me to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. At the appointment, we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs and explore potential accommodations. I rely on the Disability Services Coordinator for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing strategies. If you have not previously contacted the Disability Services Coordinator (x1618 or [LMonaghan@otterbein.edu](mailto:LMonaghan@otterbein.edu)), I encourage you to do so.

## **Email**

Outside of my office hours, I can be reached via email, and I will usually respond within 24 hours. Note: In the subject, include the course number (POLS 225), and in the body of the message, please include your first and last name.

## **Electronic Devices**

**Recording Lectures:** In accordance with federal regulations, students may not make audio recordings of class lectures without the prior written consent of the instructor. Students who have registered and documented disabilities may make audio recordings with the consent of the instructor.

**Cell Phones & iPods:** Please turn off cell phone ringers during class. No texting or no iPod listening in class. If I see you texting in class, I will automatically subtract one point from your total points.

## Drop Dates & Withdrawal Policy

Students who wish to drop the course may do so using the regular procedures. It is not the responsibility of the professor to drop students from the course.

- Last day to add course: Thursday, April 1
- Last day to drop classes with no grade recorded on transcript: Monday, May 3
- Last day to drop with “W” on transcript: Monday, May 17

## Class Schedule and Readings. This is a tentative schedule and may change with notice.

Week	Date	Topic/Reading	Assignments & Important Dates
Week 1	Mon Mar 29 Wed Mar 31 Fri Apr 2	Introduction to the course No Class No Class	No Class March 31 No Class April 2 - Good Friday
Week 2	Mon Apr 5 Wed Apr 7 Fri Apr 9	Carter & Burk, Ch 1 What Legal Reason Is Carter & Burk, Ch 2 Change & Stability in Legal Reasoning Carter & Burk, Ch 6 Law and Politics	
Week 3	Mon Apr 12 Wed Apr 14 Fri Apr 16	Baum, Ch 1 An Overview of the Courts Carter & Burk, Ch 3 Common Law Carter & Burk, Ch 4 Statutory Interpretation	
Week 4	Mon Apr 19 Wed Apr 21 Fri Apr 23	Review <b>Exam 1</b> Baum, Ch 2 Court Organization Carter & Burk, Ch 5 Interpreting the U.S. Constitution	<b>Exam 1</b>
Week 5	Mon Apr 26 Wed Apr 28 Fri Apr 30	Baum, Ch 3 Lawyers	
Week 6	Mon May 3 Wed May 5 Fri May 7	Baum, Ch 4 Selection of Judges Baum, Ch 5 Judges	
Week 7	Mon May 10 Wed May 12 Fri May 14	Review <b>Exam 2</b> No Class	<b>Exam 2</b> No Class May 14
Week 8	Mon May 17 Wed May 19 Fri May 21	Baum, Ch 6 Trial Courts: Criminal Cases	
Week 9	Mon May 24 Wed May 26 Fri May 28	Baum, Ch 7 Trial Courts: Civil Cases Baum, Ch 8 Appellate Courts: The Process	
Week 10	Mon May 31 Tue Jun 1 Wed Jun 2 Fri Jun 4	No Class Baum, Ch 9 Appellate Courts: Policy & Impact Review	No Class May 31– Memorial Day <b>Tues, June 1 follows Mon Sched</b> Last Day of Class
Week 11	Mon Jun 7 Tue Jun 8	No Class <b>Final Exam 8:00-10:00</b>	<b>Final Exam 8:00-10:00</b>