



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

College of Arts and Sciences

Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology

CJCR 5040: Seminar in Courts

Instructor	Dr. Brad Edwards Phone: (423) 946-5454 Email: edwardsb@etsu.edu Office: 201G Rogers Stout
Textbook	<i>Law, Justice, and Society 5th edition</i> by Walsh and Hemmens. Various assigned readings

Course Objectives and Design

This seminar style course will explore several aspects of law, the effect of law on society, and the effect of the law on the criminal justice system. The course has a broad focus, including exploring the role and influence of U.S. courts in creating constitutional norms and the role that social processes have in affecting the behavior of legal institutions. Specialized topics and policy implications will be discussed. The overall goal of the course is to equip students with a working knowledge of the legal system and how it impacts the operation of the criminal justice system directly and indirectly.

Grading

The grading scale is as follows:

A	100-94	B-	82-80
A-	93-90	C+	79-77
B+	89-87	C	76-73
B	86-83	F	72 and below

Assessment:

Your progress in this class will be measured by a combination of the following items:

Weekly Briefing Assignments	10%
Profile of a Justice Presentations	10%
Judicial Philosophy Paper	10%
Discussion Lead	20%
Policy/Problem paper	20%
Final Exam	30%

Weekly Briefing Assignments:

Before the first five class periods (introduction week excluded), each student will write a short paper in response to the readings for the week. These briefs must be typed, double-spaced, 12 point times new roman font, with no greater than 1 inch margins. Each brief should be informative and provide a brief synopsis of the readings and your perspective of the readings, yet also be limited to 2-4 pages per week. An electronic copy of these briefs must be turned in by noon of each class meeting day. Each brief will be graded on a five point scale based on the length of the brief, quality of writing, APA style, information presented, and critical thinking skills as shown in the briefing assignment.

Class Discussion

This class routinely discusses controversial topics that are important to the criminal justice system. My hope is that every student is able to express themselves without being concerned that their viewpoint will be disrespected. At the same time, I expect that as graduate students you are able to make informed arguments based in research rather than subjective opinions. I also expect that each student will actively listen to others and show respect to the viewpoints of others. Finally, attendance is expected at each class session. Every two absences from class will result in a letter grade deduction of your course grade.

Judicial Philosophy Paper

There is an ongoing debate as to the proper way to interpret the Constitution. The two primary judicial philosophies are often called “originalism” and “living constitution”. A document promoting both philosophies is available on D2L. In approximately 5 pages, a well thought out response to these readings should provide your perspective on which way is the “proper” method to interpret the Constitution. Note: quality of argument is important here- it might be necessary to cite additional readings and/or cases to support your position, and the position should be presented in a scholarly tone.

Profile of a Justice

To underscore the importance of the Supreme Court to the evolution of U.S. jurisprudence, several class sessions will begin with a segment called “Profile of a Justice”. Students will put together a short presentation that provides a profile of one of the current or former U.S. Supreme Court Justices. In addition to providing a brief personal biography, the profile of a justice should include a discussion of the justice’s educational background, prior professional positions and court appointments, Supreme Court nomination and confirmation, judicial philosophy, and votes/opinions in landmark cases. This assignment is supposed to be fun. Interesting facts, rumored personality quirks, and scandalous stories about the justices are welcome. The Profile must be presented using a Powerpoint presentation. A copy of the presentation must be emailed to the professor by noon of the class in which it will be presented. All nine current Supreme Court Justices will be profiled as well as recently retired and/or deceased Justices.

Policy/Problem Papers

A list of court-related problems or policy issues is provided below. Each student will choose one of these topics and complete a paper which offers an assessment on what research has been done on the topic (what we know), suggest holes in the literature (what we don't know), offer suggestions on what approaches could be taken to address the issue, etc. You will then have responsibility for helping to lead the discussion on that subject during the class.

Topics include:

- Bail reform
- Defense representation
- Mandatory minimum sentences
- Three strikes laws
- Judge selection/impact of outside money
- Victim services
- Risk assessments
- Technology in the courtroom
- Restitution
- Judicial diversion
- Deterrent effects of sentencing

Final Examination

There will be a final exam covering the topics covered in class. The final exam will be structured in a manner similar to that of the department's comprehensive examination but will obviously be specific to the content of this course. This assignment will be completed during the final week of the course.

Academic Misconduct

Do not cheat! I take cheating and/or plagiarism very seriously. If any student is caught cheating on any part of the course requirements, that student may be given an F for that particular assignment or for the entire course, at the discretion of the instructor. Any student caught cheating may also be reported to the Dean.

East Tennessee State University highly values academic integrity, a commitment and obligation to our faculty, students, and graduates.

*Any student with a special need for an accommodation in course activities should make arrangements with the instructor.

* This syllabus in no way constitutes a legal contract. Changes in evaluation, assignments, due dates, etc. may occur at the instructor's discretion.