

**EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
THE AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEM  
PLSC 301—Winter, 2016**

**SYLLABUS**

Instructor: Mark Maironis  
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Office hours: 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Monday & Wednesday  
& by appointment.  
Class time: None  
Location: Online

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is an introduction, at the collegiate level, to the American legal system. It explores the law's philosophical, historical, and cultural antecedents and its practical applications in our "modern" society. Upon its completion, you should be knowledgeable with our "American Legal System" and the part it plays in all of our lives on a daily basis.

**REQUIRED READING**

**Introduction to Law and the Legal System, Tenth Edition**, Frank A. Schubert, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2012, ISBN13:978-0495899334.

**EXAMS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

There will be three exams and one written assignment. Exams will cover both reading and lecture materials and are not cumulative. The exams will consist of multiple choice and true or false questions. Exams must be taken at the regularly scheduled date (**WITHIN THE 24 HOUR TIME FRAME**), unless another time has been previously approved by the instructor or in the case of a documented emergency. Each exam will constitute 30% of your grade. The writing assignment will constitute the remaining 10% of your grade.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT**

The purpose of this assignment is to enhance your critical thinking skills while reinforcing some of the course content which you have been exposed to. It should also assist you in ascertaining your knowledge of the subject matter. Further, it will hopefully challenge your ability to apply the law to a particular set of facts.

The assignment consists of choosing a case from your textbook that we have covered online. Without changing the facts of the case, you are to rewrite the opinion of the court reaching the opposite conclusion from the majority opinion. To do so you may want to reemphasize the facts,

placing greater emphasis on particular facts that the court thought less important. Another method, using a different approach than the court, is to stress different laws than those applied by the court, in effect, giving a greater priority to the law which you want to apply to the facts. The changing of any legal priorities should be based on legal precedents. An example of this assignment and further instructions can be found in the Introduction section to this online course.

The paper should be three to four pages long, typed and double-spaced. Grading will be based on your knowledge of the law (derived from this course), how you applied it to the facts and the reasonableness of your arguments. It will constitute 10% (30 points) of your course grade. It must be sent to me using the drop box system on or before April 4, 2016. **No late papers will be accepted.**

### **THREADED DISCUSSION**

The Threaded Discussions are an additional exercise that you should participate in if you wish to earn extra credit as outlined below. I do not participate in these discussions, I merely monitor and assess them. You can only log on to them prior to the exam for the units to which they are assigned. For example, the first exam is for February 9, 2016; you must complete the Threaded Discussion for Units 1 and 2 prior to February 9, 2016, i.e. on or before February 8th. The purpose of these discussions is to generate some thought-related ideas centered around certain questions I have proposed. You are evaluated on the depth of your response, its applicability to the subject matter, and your understanding of the ideas being discussed. You are not guaranteed any points merely by responding to the discussions if this criteria is not met. **Units 1 & 2 discussions will be graded concurrently with their submission, all others will be graded at the close of the semester.**

### **EXTRA CREDIT**

Students may earn up to 50 extra points by participating in the “Threaded Discussions” at the end of each unit. There will be a threaded discussion at the end of each unit with a particular question poised. Students may respond to these questions at their discretion. Based on the caliber of their response students may earn 10 points per unit for their responses, **up to a total of 50** extra credit points for the semester. You **cannot** receive all 80 extra credit points. Students are encouraged to participate as these discussions are designed to illustrate a particular point or concept covered in that unit.

### **POINTS**

Exam #1	100 points
Exam # 2	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
Writing Assignment	30 points

**Total Points: 330**  
(Extra Credit: Additional 50 points)

## SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

1/6 to 2/8/16	Introduction & Institutional Sources of American Law	Chapter I  Chapter III
2/9/16	<b><u>First Exam</u></b>	
2/9 to 3/6/16	The Judicial System & Family Law & Contracts	Chapter IV  Chapter IX  Chapter X
3/7/16	<b><u>Second Exam</u></b>	
3/7 to 4/21/16	The Law of Torts & Employment Law Lecture & Property	Chapter XI   Chapter XII
4/4/16	<b><u>Writing Assignment Due</u></b>	
4/22/16	<b><u>Final Exam</u></b>	

### ONLINE HELP

Since I am almost completely computer illiterate (to the extent of being certifiable) I can help you very little if you're experiencing technical difficulties. To this end, there are three valuable resources that you have available to assist you should the need arise. The first one walks you through the drop box system. This system will be used to submit your papers. A demonstration of this system can be found at: <http://emuonline.info/demos/dropbox.htm>.

The second source you can use if you are having trouble getting on to the online course is by phone: (888) 538-0515. This is the phone number to Continuing Education which is the sponsor of this course. The last number which may be used if you are having problems logging in is the ICT Help Desk at (734) 487-2012. If you still are having problems with the online course after contacting the appropriate department, please notify me immediately and we'll see what we can work out.

#### \*\*\*\*SPECIAL NOTE\*\*\*\*

The course offers an audio PowerPoint slideshow **and** a non-audio presentation which is essentially the PowerPoint without the audio. Some students will attempt to view the PowerPoint presentation only (since it is faster,) rather than the audio PowerPoint slideshow which is much longer and is time regulated. **This does not work!** If you do not listen to the audio slideshow you cannot pass this course. The non-audio presentation should only be used to refresh your memory after you have listened to the audio portion.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Academic dishonesty, including all forms of cheating, falsification, and/or plagiarism, will not be tolerated in this course. Penalties for an act of academic dishonesty may range from receiving a failing grade for a particular assignment to receiving a failing grade for the entire course. In addition, you may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards for discipline that can result in either a suspension or permanent dismissal. The Student Conduct Code contains detailed definitions of what constitutes academic dishonesty but if you are not sure about whether something you are doing would be considered academic dishonesty, consult with the course instructor. You may access the Code online at: [www.emich.edu/student\\_conduct/](http://www.emich.edu/student_conduct/).

**Maximum Online Courses:**

Just a reminder that the maximum number of courses that may be applied to your Political Science major is four. Other departments may have different requirements and you should check with them for any similar limitations.