

**EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
THE AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEM  
PLSC 301—FALL, 2018**

**SYLLABUS**

Instructor: Mark Maironis  
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Office hours: 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. , Monday & Wednesday & by appointment (or after class).  
Class time: 3:30 to 3:45 p.m., Monday and Wednesday  
Location: Room 221, Porter

**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**

**The Study of Law (A Critical Thinking Approach)** Fourth Edition, Katherine A. Currier & Thomas E. Eimermann, Wolters Kluwer, 2016. (ISBN 978-1-4548-5222-3)

**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 time unless another time has been previously approved by the instructor or in the case of a documented emergency. Each exam will constitute 25% (or 300 points total) of your grade. The writing assignment will constitute the remaining 25% (100 points) of your grade. There is a total of 400 points possible for the entire course.

**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 already covered in class. 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 will be provided at a later date.

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 25% of your course grade. It is due December 3, 2018. **No late papers will be accepted.**

### **SCHEDULE OF TOPICS**

#### **THE AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEM**

9/5 to 10/7/18	Introduction (Chapter 1)	Pages 1-22
	Functions/Sources of Law (Chapter 2)	Pages 23-48
	Classifications of the Law (Chapter 3)	Pages 49-78
	Court System & Role of Judges (Chapter 4)	Pages 79 108
	Civil Litigation & its Alternatives (Chapter 5)	Pages 109-154

10/8/18 **First Exam**

#### **SUBSTANTIVE LAW**

10/8 to 11/11/18	Constitutional Law (Chapter 6)	Pages 157-206
	Torts (Chapter 7)	Pages 207-282
	Contract Law (Chapter 8)	Pages 283-340

11/12/18 **Second Exam**

### **SUBSTANTIVE LAW**

11/12 to 12/11/18	Property & Estate Law (Chapter 9)	Pages 341-372
	Family Law (Chapter 11)	Pages 431-480
	Laws Affecting Business (Chapter 10)	Pages 373-

430

12/3/18 **Writing Assignment Due**

12/17/18 (3:30 p.m.) **Final Exam**

### **CLASS POINTS**

EXAM #1	25%	100 POINTS
EXAM #2	25%	100 POINTS
EXAM #3	25%	100 POINTS
WRITING ASSIGNMENT	25%	100 POINTS

**TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 400 POINTS**

### **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/).