Instructor: James Burroughs - JD, MPA
Phone: 703/993-2956
E-Mail - jburroug@gmu.edu
Fairfax Office: TBA– One hour before class and 530-7pm Monday. By Appt. after class.

Class Time/Location: M/W 9-10:15am, 201B Robinson Hall

Course Description: This course is designed to familiarize students with the American legal system. We will examine the structure and operations of courts at various levels, look at the roles played by individuals in the system, and consider a number of philosophical issues in American law. Much of our consideration will look at courts, especially higher-level courts, as players in larger political and social issues. In addition, we will look at more general theories of law, justice, and society that play a role in our philosophical and political debates.

Texts: There are three required texts for this class:


Other Readings: Journal articles listed in the syllabus are available through the GMU library databases or have the internet URL listed. You can find the articles using the E-Journal finder tool on the library website using the journal name, publication year, author and title from the syllabus.

Course Requirements and Grades: Overall grades will be based on a short legal research assignment, two written projects and on two exams. All work must be submitted on time; late papers will be marked down. No work submitted later than one week after due date will be accepted. The instructor retains discretion to award extra credit for high quality classroom participation. Students may be asked to discuss their paper topic with the class.

The instructor will use the GMU email system to send schedule changes, explain assignments and otherwise communicate with the class. Students are responsible for regularly checking their GMU email or for having their GMU email forwarded to their regularly used email address.

All work submitted must be done exclusively by the student, referenced appropriately and is subject to the GMU Honor Code.
Papers are graded based on two general factors: 1) Content and analysis, and 2) Organization and grammar. Better papers use more references and use better sources such as academic journals and law related books. Internet references are highly variable in quality ranging from very good to just awful. The graded projects are as follows:

1) Internet Legal Research Assignment (5%)

2) Legal Analysis Paper. Students will analyze a recent Supreme Court case using the methods and techniques of legal analysis found in the Carter & Burke text. (5-7 pages) (20%)

3) Paper on a US Supreme Court Decision - An analysis of a landmark Supreme Court decision on a major social or political issue. This paper should make use of law reviews, policy/political journals, treatises, and textbooks (other than the class texts). A list of topics and cases will be circulated during the semester. (6-8 pages) (25%)

3) Mid-term Exam – (25%)

4) Final Exam – (25%)

**GOVT 301 - Class Schedule**

Jan 21 - First Day of Class. Introduction to law and legal reasoning

Jan 26 - Legal History and Philosophy
Carp and Stidham – Chapter 1


Jan 28 – Thinking about Law, Justice and Society – Development of Law video
Feinman – Chapter 1

Feb 2 & 4 - Legal History and American Constitutionalism

Readings: Feinman – Chapters 2 & 3


_Constitutional Basis of American Law_
Readings: Read the _Declaration of Independence_ and the _Constitution of the United States_. After reading both documents identify the complaints against the King of England in the Declaration and then identify how the complaints were dealt with in the Constitution. Copies of the Declaration are available
via the internet at Findlaw, from the National Archives and many other locations. The Constitution is
found in the back of the Carp & Stidham text. You may want to make a side-by-side comparison or list
the complaint, then the solution.

Feb 9 & 11 – Introduction to Legal Reasoning and Legal Research

Carter - Chapter 1-3
Internet: Lawnerds.com - Read Parts 1 & 2 Legal Reasoning (IRAC formula)

Feb 16 & 18 - Organization of the Judicial System
Carp & Stidham - Chapters 2,3,4

Legal Research Assignment (Due 2/18)

Feb 23 & 25 - Participants in the Judicial Process
Carp & Stidham - Chapter 5, 6, 8

PRACTICE FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION: TWO VIEWS OF CORPORATE LAW". Vol 73, Page

March 2 & 4 - Criminal Courts & Process
Carp & Stidham - Chapters 9 & 10
Feinman – Chapters 8 & 9

Alan Vinegrad. Hofstra Law Review. "The Role of the Prosecutor: Serving the Interests of

Video – And Justice for All.

March 9 & 11 – Spring Break

March 16 - Criminal Process continued

March 18 – Midterm Exam

March 23 & 25 - Civil Law and Civil Courts
Carp & Stidham - Chapter 11
Feinman – Chapter 4

March 23 – First Paper Due

March 30 & April 1 – Torts, Contract and Property Law

Feinman – Chapters 5-7
A couple of references to show the debate over Tort Law and Tort Reform (some tongue in cheek):


April 6 & 8 – Administrative Law & International Law


Overview of International Law – Legal Information Institute (one page)
http://www.law.cornell.edu/topics/international.html


April 13 & 15 – Judges, Judicial Selection, Judicial Politics and Judicial Policymaking

Carp & Stidham - Chapters 7, 14 & 15


April 20 & 22 – Judicial Decision Making Processes

Carp & Stidham - Chapters 12 & 13

April 27 & 29 - Interpretation of Law: Constitution, Statutes & Rules

April 27 - Final Paper Due

Carter - Chapters 4-6


Handout: TBD

May 4 – Last Day of Class - Exam Review

May 11 (Monday) – FINAL EXAM – 7:30-10:15am