Schar School of Policy and Government
Government 423
Constitutional Law: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
Fall Semester 2020
Online and Weekly Zoom Meetings, Thursday 7:30-9

Instructor: Dr. Carol Walker
Email: cwalke22@gmu.edu
Office Hours: Virtual appointments available most evenings/weekends; please contact instructor to make an appointment.

Recommended Prerequisite: GOVT 103

Course Description: This course explores the constitutional law of civil liberties and civil rights in depth. We will trace the development of our civil liberties and civil rights along with the application and modification of it through precedent or political or societal changes. This course seeks to understand the legal context of civil rights and liberties issues to allow for more informed conversations, recognize the history and current legal state of these issues, and attempt to predict future legal outcomes. Ultimately, this course is not about mere recitation of facts or personal opinions, but about developing a new approach to identifying and solving problems.

Learning Objectives:

- Develop a substantive understanding of historical and modern developments in the constitutional law of civil rights and civil liberties.
- Develop a substantive understanding of the political and societal processes that interact with law to shape the decision-making environment in which U.S. Supreme Court justices decide constitutional issues regarding civil rights and civil liberties.
- Apply these substantive understandings to current issues and hypothetical problems so as to predict future legal outcomes.
- Build skills in reading and effectively summarizing constitutional law.
- Develop a firm grasp and command of how to convey in writing sophisticated analytic arguments related to civil liberties and civil rights.
- Be able to critically think about the law and to synthesize and apply legal principles.
Textbooks:

*Note: The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary and communicated via Blackboard.

Course Structure: Course assignments, including lectures and other content, will be posted to Blackboard each week for your review. This class can be completed only reviewing that material. We will meet weekly via Zoom at roughly our normal class time for an hour or so to allow for more interaction. During the Zoom meetings, we will discuss the material in some additional details, review any questions, and review for exams or assignments. Participating at these Zoom meetings will count as class participation. If you do not attend the Zoom sessions, you will be expected to participate more in the online discussion forums on Blackboard.

Course Requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Complete by Date</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
<td>Thursday, October 8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>Thursday, October 22</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assignment</td>
<td>Thursday, November 19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Thursday, December 10</td>
<td>30</td>
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*All assignments will be completed or turned in on Blackboard.

Class Participation: This portion of your grade will be determined by your participation in class during the semester either via Zoom sessions or on the Discussion Board. There will also be four exercises for you to complete. Additional details will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

Quiz: There will be one multiple choice quiz you will take on Blackboard.

Writing Assignment: The Writing Assignment is posted on Blackboard and includes instructions. Outside books and material are not required.

Midterm Exam: The midterm exam will focus on material covered during the first half of course and includes multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer.

Final Exam: The final exam will focus on everything learned in the second half of class, but also include critical material covered during the first half of the semester and includes multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer.
Grade Scale:

- 98 and above: A+
- 93-97 and above: A
- 90-92.99%: A-
- 86-89.99%: B+
- 83-85.99%: B
- 80-82.99%: B-
- 77-79.99%: C+
- 73-76.99%: C
- 70-72.99%: C-
- 65-69.99%: D
- 64.99 and below: F

Policies:

Please review the GMU website for information on academic policies. Some items:

**Late Assignments**: You may turn in an assignment up to one week late. You will be deducted ten points a day, for a maximum of 70 points. **No assignments will be accepted after a week unless prior arrangements were made due to mitigating circumstances.**

**Attendance Policy**: Students are strongly encouraged to attend every class and their grade will be negatively impacted if they miss too many classes. Please make every effort to get to class on time and please notify the instructor if you will have to leave early. If you must arrive late or depart early, please take a seat in a location where your arrival or departure will not disrupt ongoing class activities. Students who miss class or any part thereof are responsible for all materials covered during that class and are expected to work with classmates to ensure they know what they missed. Please contact the instructor if medical difficulties or a personal crisis prohibits you from attending class.

**Honor Code**: Established rules per the GMU honor code covering plagiarism and academic honesty must be followed at all times. In this class, all written assignments, including examinations, must be completed individually. Web postings, reports, and examinations are to be the sole products of the individual whose name is on them. Collaborations on written assignments and exams are not permitted. Any confirmed violations of this rule will result in a grade of “F” for the assignment in question and may be turned over to Honor Committee for additional action.

**Important Dates**: Please review the GMU website for important dates for the semester, such as the drop/add deadline.

For more information on the resources available to you on campus, see Student Support Resources on Campus.
Course Schedule:

*All readings are expected to be completed prior to reviewing the lectures and other material online. During class, we may deviate from readings—some weeks we will discuss material after reading and some prior.

See GMU’s academic calendar for more details.

Thursday, August 27

- First day of class
- Introduction to the Course

Readings:

- CHAPTER 1: The Supreme Court and the Constitution
- Reference Materials

Thursday, September 3

Readings:

- CHAPTER 2: The Judiciary: Institutional Powers and Constraints
- CHAPTER 3. Incorporation of the Bill of Rights

Thursday, September 10

Readings:

- CHAPTER 4. Religion: Exercise and Establishment

Thursday, September 17

Readings:

- CHAPTER 5. Freedom of Speech, Assembly, and Association

Thursday, September 24

Readings:

- CHAPTER 6. Freedom of the Press

Thursday, October 1

Readings:

- CHAPTER 7. The Boundaries of Free Expression: Libel, Obscenity, and Emerging Areas of Government Regulation

Thursday, October 8

Readings:

- CHAPTER 8. The Right to Keep and Bear Arms
  - *Need to complete Quiz by this date.*
Thursday, October 15
Readings:
  • CHAPTER 9. Privacy and Personal Liberty

Thursday, October 22
Readings:
  • MIDTERM EXAM
    o *Must complete final exam by 11:59 pm*

Thursday, October 29
Readings:
  • CHAPTER 10. Investigations and Evidence

Thursday, November 5
Readings:
  • CHAPTER 11. Attorneys, Trials, and Punishments

Thursday, November 12
Readings:
  • CHAPTER 12. Race Discrimination and the Foundations of Equal Protection

Thursday, November 19
  • *WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE*
Readings:
  • CHAPTER 13. Contemporary Approaches to Equal Protection

Thursday, November 26
  • *Happy Thanksgiving, no class*

Thursday, December 3
  • Last day of class
Readings:
  • CHAPTER 14. Voting and Representation

Thursday, December 10
  • FINAL EXAM
    o *Must complete final exam by 10:15 pm*