Instructor: Dr. Carol Walker
Email: cwalke22@gmu.edu
Office: TBD
Office Hours: Please contact instructor to make an appointment.

Recommended Prerequisite: GOVT 103

Course Description: This course will examine the American judicial system and its operations. We will examine the legal structure and operations of courts at various levels, including the United States Supreme Court. In addition, we will explore the role of courts in the American system of government and the role they play in policymaking. To understand the process and procedures developed in the American judicial system, we will focus on constitutional principles and legal theory.

Learning Objectives:

- Describe the agenda-setting and decision making processes for the U.S. Supreme Court and evaluate their equity and effectiveness.
- Learn and increase ability to critically analyze theories of judicial behavior.
- Develop a firm grasp and command of how to convey in writing sophisticated analytic arguments related to judicial proceedings.
- Be able to critically assess the academic literature in the various fields discussed over the semester.

Textbooks:

- Carp, Stidham, Manning, and Holmes; Judicial Process in America (Tenth Edition)
- Carter and Burke; Reason in Law (Ninth Edition)

*Note: The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary. As necessary, updates will be available in class or on Blackboard.
Course Requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
<td>Self-paced, no later than May 1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quiz 2</td>
<td>Self-paced, no later than May 1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>March 6</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>40%</td>
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</tbody>
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- The **Quizzes** cover your reading assignments and will be completed online and will be a combination of fill-in-the-blank or multiple choice responses. Quizzes will be on Blackboard.

- The **Midterm Exam** is an essay assignment to be completed at home that will address questions stemming from your readings, lectures, or in-class discussions. It will be posted on Blackboard. The grading criteria is based on:
  - *Is there an introduction that states a primary thesis/argument to the essay?*
  - *Does the essay completely answer the question?*
  - *Does the essay provide sufficient examples for the thesis?*
  - *Is the writing clear and well organized?*
  - *Does the essay summarize the argument?*

- The **Final Exam** is cumulative and multiple choice, completed in class.

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 five points a day, for a maximum of 30 points. No assignments will be accepted after a week.

**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.
Course Schedule:

*All readings are expected to be completed prior to class.*

Tuesday, January 23

- Introduction to the Course
- **Readings:** Judicial Process in America—Chapter 1: Foundations of Law in the United States

Tuesday, January 30

- **Readings:** Judicial Process in America—Chapter 2: The Federal Judicial System
- *Judicial Process in America*—Chapter 3: State Judicial Systems

Tuesday, February 6

- **Readings:** Judicial Process in America—Chapter 4: Jurisdiction and Policymaking Boundaries

Tuesday, February 13

- **Readings:** Judicial Process in America—Chapter 5: State Judges
- *Judicial Process in America*—Chapter 6: Federal Judges

Tuesday, February 20

- **Readings:** Judicial Process in America—Chapter 7: Policy Links among the Citizenry, the President and the Federal Judiciary

Tuesday, February 27

- **Readings:** Judicial Process in America—Chapter 8: Lawyers, Litigants, and Interest Groups in the Judicial Process

Tuesday, March 6

- **Midterm Essay Due**
- **Readings:** Judicial Process in America—Chapter 9: Crime and Procedures prior to Criminal Trial
- *Judicial Process in America*—Chapter 10: The Criminal Trial and Its Aftermath

Tuesday, March 13

- Spring Break (no class)

Tuesday, March 20

- **Readings:** Judicial Process in America—Chapter 11: The Civil Court Process
Tuesday, March 27

- **Readings**: *Judicial Process in America*—Chapter 12: Decision Making by Trial Court Judges
- *Judicial Process in America*—Chapter 13: Decision Making in Collegial Courts

Tuesday, April 3

- **Readings**: *Judicial Process in America*—Chapter 14: Implementation and Impact of Judicial Policies
- *Judicial Process in America*—Chapter 15: Policymaking by American Judges

Tuesday, April 10

- **Readings**: *Reason in Law*—Chapter 1: What is Legal Reasoning and Why It Matters
- *Reason in Law*—Chapter 2: Change and Stability in Legal Reasoning

Tuesday, April 17

- **Readings**: *Reason in Law*—Chapter 3: Common Law
- *Reason in Law*—Chapter 4: Statutory Interpretation

Tuesday, April 24

- **Readings**: *Reason in Law*—Chapter 5: Interpreting the U.S. Constitution

Tuesday, May 1

- **Readings**: *Reason in Law*—Chapter 6: Law and Politics

Tuesday, May 8

- Reading Day (*no class*)

Tuesday, May 15

- **Final Exam, 7:30 pm – 10:15 pm**