The primary purpose of this course is to introduce you to the function and organization of the judicial system in the United States, with an emphasis on the decision-making of judges at both the state and federal level – the justices of the Supreme Court in particular. Judges play an integral role in the political process. While some believe that the courts have become too involved in the policy process, few would dispute that courts are far more involved in the policy process than ever before. In recent years, the Supreme Court has rendered decisions on issues such as legislative reapportionment, the limitations states can place on access to abortion, the application of the death penalty, the ability of Congress to regulate content on the Internet, and even becoming involved in the 2000 presidential election. In addition, lower state and federal courts are intimately involved in the policy process as well, making the study of these institutions vital to our understanding of the American political process.

In this course, we will focus on the courts as both legal and political institutions, with an emphasis on the political nature of judicial decision making, and the relationship between the courts and the other branches of government. While much of our time will be dedicated to the study of the Supreme Court, we will also address the role and function of trial and appellate courts, at the state and federal levels.

**Required Texts**


Additional readings will be available via D2L throughout the semester.

**Contacting Me**

You are always welcome to stop by my office during office hours to discuss questions/issues related to the course or other academic matters. If my office hours conflict with your schedule, you may also contact me by phone or via D2L. I will do my best to return your call within 24 hours. If you would like a more immediate response, I check my email frequently, and will return messages as promptly as possible. This is a difficult class, and I expect that many of you will encounter problems in completing some of the assignments. Please take advantage of the opportunity to discuss the course material with me outside of class, particularly if you are having trouble, or would like additional clarification.

When contact me via email, please use appropriate greetings “Dr. Comparato, Mr. Comparato, Professor, etc.” Use appropriate grammar and spelling, and maintain a professional tone. You should also close your message with your name.
**COURSE WEB PAGE**

This course will be managed using D2L. You will have access to all course information, including the syllabus, course schedule, reading assignments, resources for your papers, discussion boards, and an email system to contact me or other students in the class. I will regularly post messages regarding the reading, schedule, assignments, and grades to the course page. Therefore, you should make a habit of checking the course page on a daily basis to keep up with reading assignments and other course related announcements. There are numerous computer labs on campus, so access to D2L should not be a problem.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

One of the primary purposes of this course is to help you develop your analytical and writing skills. As a result, there are no exams for this class. Your grade will be based on two short papers, one prediction paper, an in-class presentation, quizzes, and class participation. All assignments are to be submitted in class on the date they are due. Ten points will be deducted for each day that they are late.

**SHORT PAPERS (20% EACH)**

The main assignment for this course is a research paper in which you will predict the outcome of a case that is currently before the Supreme Court. In order to help you prepare the prediction paper, you will also be required to write two short (5 – 7 pages) papers on topics that we will discuss in detail in class. To write the prediction paper, you will need to understand the primary theories of judicial decision making, how the Supreme Court functions, and how to conduct legal research. Each of the short papers will help you to develop a basic understanding of these issues and skills, which will aid you in completing the prediction paper.

**PREDICTION PAPER (30%)**

The prediction paper is the central requirement for this course. Each of you will choose a case that has been accepted by the Supreme Court for oral argument this term, and will make a prediction about how three of the justices (one each from the liberal, moderate, and conservative blocs) will decide the case. I will provide you with a list of cases, along with basic information about the subject matter in the case, early in the semester. You will then be free to choose a case from that list, though no two students may write on the same case, so you may not get your first choice of cases. In the paper, you will make predictions about the positions that each justice will take, based on your understanding of judicial decision-making, the political environment, and the personal ideology of the justices. You will include information about who wins the case, and what doctrine your justices support. By necessity, you will need to know a great deal about the issues and facts surrounding the case itself, that justice’s past voting record in similar cases and their political ideology, gleaned from their own writings, and political and scholarly commentary on that justice.

I understand that a number of these cases will be decided by the time your paper is due, but do not count on your case being one of them. I am most interested in seeing how effectively you are able to conduct research and make an argument to support your predictions, and less interested in seeing that you correctly predicted the outcome.
**PRESENTATION (10%)**

During the last three weeks of class, you will present your findings and predictions to the class. You do not need to have the entire prediction paper completed at the time of your presentation, but you do need to prepare a 15 – 20 minute presentation, in which you outline the case you have chosen, the justices you are analyzing, present your predictions, and provide justification with reference to the research you have conducted on the justices.

**PARTICIPATION (20%)**

You must be an active member of the class. As this is an upper-level course, it is expected that you do all of the reading in a timely manner and arrive in class prepared to engage that material in a critical manner. Your grade in this area is composed of your attendance in class as well as your regular, substantive contribution to the learning environment.

I begin class promptly at the scheduled time. We will make full use of the entire time we are allotted for class. I do not tolerate tardiness. If you have circumstances that dictate chronic absence or tardiness, I strongly suggest that you reevaluate your decision to take this class.

**POLICIES**

Students should behave in a professional and courteous manner at all times. It is essential that students feel comfortable in the classroom, and while disagreement is expected and encouraged, please remain respectful of your fellow students and the professor. Any student behaving in a manner that is in any way disruptive or inappropriate will be removed, and potentially sanctioned as outlined in the University Student Conduct Code. You should also reference the Professor-Student Agreement posted on D2L for additional information regarding the expectations I have of you, and what you should expect from me.

- You are responsible for all material covered in class regardless of the reason for absence.
- You must turn off and stow away all electronic devices (phones, mp3 players, tablets, computers, etc.) during class. Studies have shown that the use of laptops is distracting and leads to lower retention rates and comprehension. Please see the following piece for more information and studies related to the use of technology in the classroom: “Why I Just Asked My Students to Put Their Laptops Away.” Should you use an electronic device in class, points will be deducted from your grade at my discretion.
- Students will be assigned seats. You are expected to sit in that seat for the remainder of the semester. This will help to facilitate me learning names and assigning participation credit accurately. Should you have any issues that require you to be closer to the front of the class such as vision or hearing impairments, please contact me immediately so that I may make appropriate accommodations.
- Eating is not permitted during class.
- Make up exams will not be given. If you miss an exam, you will be given an alternative paper assignment.
- Incompletes will not be granted except in the most unusual of circumstances.
**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

You are responsible for your own work. It is considered cheating to submit someone else’s work as your own. Using information from another source (book, article, internet site, another student, etc.) without properly crediting the author is plagiarism. Direct quotations, paraphrased information, and the general use of another person’s idea must be properly referenced in your work. During exams, you are not allowed external aids (notes, books, etc.). The penalty for violations such as plagiarism, cheating, or other misconduct will result in a failing grade in the course, and may result in a formal charge of misconduct as outlined in the [University Student Conduct Code](#), possibly leading to further sanctions, including suspension or expulsion.

If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating and plagiarism, contact the Southern Illinois University office of Academic Advising, or view the [University Undergraduate Catalog](#) for more information.

**DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities who require individualized testing or other accommodations should identify themselves to me immediately. Every effort will be made to accommodate your needs. [Disabilities Support Services](#) can assist you with testing, note-taking, and accessibility issues.

**GRADE DISTRIBUTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Paper One</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Paper Two</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td>20%</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**GRADING SCALE**

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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90 – 100 (450 – 500 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80 – 89 (400 – 449 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 – 79 (350 – 399 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60 – 69 (300 – 349 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 – Below (≤ 299 points)</td>
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**Total: 500 points**
The schedule for the class is tentative, as circumstances may dictate that we spend more time on some subject matter, and less time on other areas. I will also deviate from the syllabus to discuss a number of resources available to you in obtaining information to prepare for the paper assignments. I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus as necessary.

I. INTRODUCTION TO JUDICIAL PROCESS (WEEK 1)

II. JUDICIAL POWER (WEEKS 2 – 3)

III. COURT FUNCTION AND ORGANIZATION (WEEKS 4 – 5)

IV. THE ACTORS (WEEKS 6 – 8)

V. JUDICIAL DECISION-MAking (WEEKS 9 – 11)

VI. POLICY MAKING AND IMPACT (WEEK 12)

VII. PRESENTATIONS (WEEKS 13 – 15)

IMPORTANT DATES

SHORT PAPER ONE: Friday, February 19th
SHORT PAPER TWO: Friday, March 25th
PRESENTATIONS: April 19th – May 5th
FINAL PAPER: Friday, May 6th, 4:00 p.m.

CLASS WILL NOT MEET:

March 15th – 17th (Spring Break)
SAFETY AWARENESS FACTS AND EDUCATION

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: http://safe.siu.edu

SALUKI CARES

The purpose of Saluki Cares is to develop, facilitate and coordinate a university-wide program of care and support for students in any type of distress—physical, emotional, financial, or personal. By working closely with faculty, staff, students and their families, SIU will continue to display a culture of care and demonstrate to our students and their families that they are an important part of the community. For information on Saluki Cares, (815) 539-3774, or siucares@siu.edu, http://saluki.caressiu.edu/index.html

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. We ask that you become familiar with the SIU Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (B.E.R.T.) programs. Please reference the Building Emergency Response Protocol for Syllabus attachments on the following pages. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency.

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

SIU embraces people from all walks of life, from many different cultures and subcultures, and representing all strata of society, nationalities, ethnicities, lifestyles, and affiliations. Learning from and working with people who differ is an important part of education as well an essential preparation for any career. For more information please visit: http://www.inclusiveexcellence.siu.edu

LEARNING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Help is within reach. Learning support services offers free tutoring on campus and math lab. To find more information please visit the Center for Learning and Support Services website:

Tutoring: http://tutoring.siu.edu
Math Lab: http://tutoring.siu.edu/math_tutoring/index.html

WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center offers free tutoring services to all SIU students and faculty. To find a Center or Schedule an appointment please visit: http://write.siu.edu

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION & EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Our office’s main focus is to ensure that the university complies with federal and state equity policies and handles reporting and investigating of discrimination cases. For more information visit: http://diversity.siu.edu

Additional Resources Available:

SALUKINET: https://salukinet.siu.edu/en/home/displaylogin
ADVICE: http://advice.siu.edu
SIU ONLINE: http://online.siu.edu/