PS 126
Introduction to Law and Politics
Credits: 3
M,T,W,R,F

Co-requisites WR 399; PS 321; PH 321

This course is the introductory course to the “Summer Pre-law Series” developed jointly by the Political Science, Philosophy and English Departments. The summer series is a set group of courses that are geared toward providing students with the tools and knowledge needed to successfully apply, matriculate, and graduate from law school. PS 126 serves as the gateway course and will be offered in the zero-week each summer and offered as a hybrid course with two days on campus and two days online. Students must take this course to enroll in the three other courses that complete the series. Given that we will be completing the entire course in a four-day period, the schedule will be intense. In this course, we will pursue multiple goals simultaneously. First, the course will provide a general introduction to the role of law and the lawyer in our society as advocate and social engineer as well as the formidable training required to enter this profession. Second, this course will provide distinct and individual advising opportunities for our students. Third, the course will introduce students to the legal systems, both criminal and civil. By the end of this course, our students will have obtained the fundamental background information that will provide a stable and strong basis for their further legal education.

Textbooks:
Readings from Judicature ed. Elliot Slotnick Congressional Quarterly Press.
Judicial Process and Judicial Policymaking by G. Alan Tarr 5th edition

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this course students will be able to:

Describe the role of a legal advocate within the American judicial system.
Explain the steps in a criminal or civil proceeding.
Articulate the differences between state and federal procedures and courts.
Distinguish the difference between trial and appellate proceedings.
Comprehend the process for applying to law school.
Monday:
Unit One Overview and Goals of the Summer Series
Unit Two Introduction to the legal process
  Introduction to terminology
  Types of courts (trial, appellate, major and minor)
  Types of cases (criminal and civil)
  Structure of the judiciary (Federal and Oregon systems)
Unit Three Writing Diagnostic
Unit 4 In-class reading assignment from Slotnick reader
  1) Judicial Selection in the United States: a special report. Berkson, Pg. 50
  2) The Changing role of the trial judge. Ludwig, Pg. 333
Unit 5 Introduction to the Legal System
  Foundations of judicial power and influence in the U.S. System
Unit 6 Introducing the Players: Judges, video presentation
Unit 7 Schedule an appointment (via skype/chat/phone) for law school advising.
  Screen either “My Cousin Vinny” or “A Civil Action”

Evening assignment:
Tarr Chapters 5, 6, and 7

Tuesday
Unit I Trial Courts: criminal justice process
Unit II Trial Courts: civil justice process
Unit III Appellate Court process

Evening Assignment: Readings from Judicature
Posner, Nathan L: Truth, justice, and the client’s interest: can the lawyer serve all three?
Wasby, Steven L.: Civil rights litigation by organizations: constraints and choices
Cooley, John W.: Arbitration vs. mediation – explaining the differences
Fein & Newborne: Why should we care about independent and accountable judges?

Wednesday
Unit I Group discussion and Q&A
Unit II Introducing the Players Part I
  Lawyers, lecture and video presentation
Unit 3 Law School Overview & Individual advising
  o What are your goals?
    ▪ Why do you want a law degree?
  o What are your expectations?
  o Do you want to practice law?
    ▪ Where do you want to practice?
    ▪ Where do you want to live?
  o How much do you want to spend?
Do you have a specialty in mind?
What are your strengths?
What are your weaknesses?
Do you enjoy competition?
Do you have special needs?
What type of learning environment suits you?
What is your current GPA?
Have you taken the LSAT already or a practice test?
  - If so, how did it go?

Unit 4 The Law School Experience: video Mock L1
Unit 5 Introducing the Players Part III
  Interest Groups
Unit 6 Group discussions: interview questions for law school

**Evening Assignment: Supreme Court Docket Grants versus Denials**

**Thursday**
Unit I Discussion board: Are the most important cases docketed? What cases were on the year's docket and what has been ignored?
Unit II Courtroom visit, attend some formal procedure at your local or state courthouse.
Unit III Report on courtroom experience & discussion board
Unit IV Reading: Tarr Chapter 8
  Excerpts from Landmark cases:
  *Brown v. Board of Education* 1955
  *Roe v. Wade* 1973
  *District of Columbia v. Heller* 2008
  *INS v. Chadha* 1983
  *Commonwealth of Massachusetts et al. v. Environmental Protection Agency et al* 2007
Unit V How to brief a case

**Evening Assignment: Brief one of the assigned cases**

**Friday**
Unit I Physically visit your top choice or safety school
(Alternatively, set up a phone visit and interview with an admissions officer)
Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities

"Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Disability Access Services (DAS). Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 737-4098."

Link to Statement of Expectations for Student Conduct, i.e., cheating policies
http://oregonstate.edu/admin/stucon/achon.htm