

University at Buffalo
PSC 303: Constitutional Law
Spring 2017
MWF 11:00 a.m. - 11:50 a.m.
Talbert 107

Instructor: Dr. Rachael K. Hinkle

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Office Hours: Wednesday, noon to 3:00 p.m. and by appointment

Required Textbook

Constitutional Law for a Changing America: Institutional Powers and Constraints (9th ed.)
by Lee Epstein and Thomas G. Walker. ISBN 978-1-4833-8405-4.¹

Course Description

In this course, we will learn about the history of the Constitution, the role of the Supreme Court (and other courts) in interpreting the Constitution, and the powers given by the Constitution (as interpreted by the Court) to the different branches of the federal government and the states.

Readings consist of Supreme Court decisions themselves, and students are expected to carefully read cases before they are analyzed in class. This course is designed for students with at least the status of sophomore. It is recommended that students should have completed either PSC 101 or PSC 215 before taking this course.

Class Expectations

- A** Attend class. Please make every effort to come to class on time and stay for the full time. If you must come in late or leave early, please let me know in advance if possible and sit close to the door to minimize distractions. Please refrain from talking to your neighbors during class—if you have something to say, share it with all of us. Please also refrain from any other unnecessary activities in class that might distract others (including sleeping, cell phone ringing, and any cell phone use including texting and games).
- B** Be prepared to discuss the readings in class. Students are expected to read assignments prior to coming to class in order to fully participate in classroom discussions.

¹You must get the 9th edition, but it is not necessary to have access to the online case archive, so it is fine to buy or rent a used copy of the text.

- C Actively take notes in class. There will **NOT** be powerpoint slides available to students containing all the most important information. If you would like pointers about note-taking techniques, please come to office hours or make an appointment.
- D Read and periodically refer to this syllabus. If you have a question, consult the syllabus first to see if it contains the answer to your question.
- E Check your university e-mail regularly to obtain information regarding this class.

Requirements and Evaluation

- **Class attendance and participation (10%)**

Attendance will be considered along with class participation when calculating this portion of your grade. Class participation must be respectful and professional.

- **Exams (30% each)**

There will be three (3) non-comprehensive exams, and each will be worth 30% of the final grade. It is the student's responsibility to take exams when they are scheduled. Permission for a make-up exam will normally be warranted only for serious medical reasons certified in writing by a physician. Permission to take a make-up will normally be granted, moreover, only where there is prompt notification to the instructor of the reason for the absence, preferably in advance of the scheduled exam if possible. A make-up exam may be of a different nature, content, and structure than the scheduled exam.

- **Course Evaluation (1% extra credit)**

Please complete the online course evaluation at the end of the semester. Your constructive evaluation of the course and my teaching will enable me to improve the course in the future. If you complete the course evaluation and turn in the receipt that is provided to you by UB for doing so (no later than the day evaluations close), you will be given 1 percentage point of extra credit.

Grading

Percent of Points	Letter Grade	Interpretation
≥ 92.5	A	High Distinction
≥ 89.5	A-	High Distinction
≥ 86.5	B+	Superior
≥ 82.5	B	Superior
≥ 79.5	B-	Superior
≥ 76.5	C+	Average
≥ 72.5	C	Average
≥ 69.5	C-	Average
≥ 66.5	D+	Minimal Passing Grade
≥ 59.5	D	Minimal Passing Grade
< 59.5	F	Failure

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the University's academic integrity policies, available in the Undergraduate Catalog.

Accessibility Resources

If you require classroom or testing accommodations due to a disability, please contact Accessibility Resources, located at 25 Capen Hall. AR can be reached by phone at (716) 645-2608 or by email at stu-accessibility@buffalo.edu. Please inform me as soon as possible about your needs so that we can coordinate your accommodations.

Course Schedule

The following schedule is approximate; assignments may be adjusted during the course of the semester. Exam dates will not be changed unless absolutely necessary.

Date	Topic	Reading
Jan. 30	Course Introduction	
Feb. 1	The Judiciary	pp. 49-69
Feb. 3		pp. 69-82
Feb. 6		pp. 83-101
Feb. 8		pp. 101-111
Feb. 10		pp. 112-120
Feb. 13	The Legislature	pp. 121-131
Feb. 15		pp. 132-144
Feb. 17		pp. 144-160
Feb. 20		pp. 160-171
Feb. 22		pp. 171-180
Feb. 24	Review	
Feb. 27	Exam 1	
Mar. 1	The Executive	pp. 183-198
Mar. 3		pp. 199-212
Mar. 6		pp. 212-227
Mar. 8		pp. 228-237
Mar. 10		pp. 238-251
Mar. 13		pp. 251-260
Mar. 15		pp. 260-268
Mar. 17	Separation of Powers	pp. 269-283
Mar. 20-24	No Class (Spring Break)	
Mar. 27		pp. 283-295
Mar. 29		pp. 295-310
Mar. 31		pp. 310-328
Apr. 3		pp. 328-340
Apr. 5	Review	
Apr. 7	No Class (I will be at a conference.)	
Apr. 10	Exam 2	
Apr. 12	Federalism	pp. 343-362
Apr. 14		pp. 362-374
Apr. 17		pp. 374-387
Apr. 19		pp. 387-401
Apr. 21		pp. 401-414
Apr. 24	The Commerce Power	pp. 415-427
Apr. 26		pp. 427-438
Apr. 28		pp. 438-458
May 1		pp. 458-466
May 3		pp. 466-478
May 5		pp. 478-492
May 8		pp. 492-500
May 10	Review	
May 12	Exam 3	