



DREXEL UNIVERSITY  
**Thomas R. Kline**  
School of Law

LAW 110 - AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEMS (Spring 2025)

SYLLABUS

Professor Andrew Leahey, Esq.  
(he/him)

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Office Hours: By Appointment – [<https://calendly.com/profandrewleahey/signup>].

Day/Time: T/Th, 10:00AM – 11:50AM

Location: Pearlstein - 207

This course provides a comprehensive introduction to the American legal system and exposes students to the multiple forms of lawmaking and sources of legal and regulatory power present in America today. Students will learn to differentiate between common law created by judges, statutes and laws created by the legislature, and regulations promulgated by executive agencies. The class will explore the relationship between federal and state law, the role of federalism and the legal underpinnings of the checks and balances system that aims to keep equilibrium between the judicial, legislative, and executive branches. The course will also examine the American system of litigation and the structure of the court system, the jurisdiction of federal and state courts, and the litigation process.

Required Text:

The following text is required:

[Judicial Process in America by Carp, Manning, Holmes, & Stidham \(12<sup>th</sup> edition, 2023\).](#)

In the syllabus, this book is abbreviated as “JPIA”.

All other cases and readings listed on the syllabus will be available on Blackboard.

### **Assignments, Grades, and Evaluation:**

You will be expected to write three short response papers and take two exams over the course of the quarter. The instructions for papers will be distributed on Blackboard. There will be a review before each exam. In addition, class attendance and participation will comprise 20% of your grade.

**Attendance is required.** Please complete the assigned readings before each class. This will enable you to actively engage in our discussions, share valuable insights, and raise thought-provoking questions. Your understanding and contributions greatly enhance our collective learning experience.

Please note that attendance and participation are important components of this course. Regular attendance, punctuality, active engagement where appropriate, and being prepared with necessary materials positively impact your class participation grade. More than two unexcused absences, or consistent tardiness, may negatively reflect your participation score.

If you do need to miss a class, I recommend coordinating with a classmate to catch up on what you missed. For any absences you'd like to be excused, please feel free to discuss with me via email. I am here to support your learning and accommodate your needs wherever possible.

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

Three Response Papers	30% (10% each)
Class Attendance	10%
Participation	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	30%

### **Dates to Remember:**

First Response Paper Due: April 17

Midterm exam: May 1 (Take-home)

Second Response Paper Due: May 8

Third Response Paper Due: May 22

Final exam: Finals Week (Take-home)

### **Other Policies, Procedures and Comments:**

**Electronic Devices in Class:** Please silence all electronic devices and, barring an emergency, refrain from looking at your cell phones during class. You may use tablets or laptops to

take notes. For the sake of your fellow students' privacy, please refrain from recording class absent a specific accommodation.

**Absences from Exams and Late Papers:** As a general matter, only extreme, unexpected and well-documented emergencies will constitute an excuse for failing to sit for an examination. For late papers, as many as 5 points may be deducted from your grade for every day that the paper is late. Extensions will be given only in extraordinary circumstances, and only more than 12 hours before the due date.

**Plagiarism, Cheating, Fabrication & Academic Misconduct:** Plagiarizing is one of those things that comes with really bad ramifications, please just refrain from doing it. That goes for submitting material created by any artificial intelligence large-language models as well. Academic sanctions in this class will range from an F on the assignment to an F in this course. A report of suspected academic dishonesty will be sent to the Department head or Student Conduct. Additional information and definitions can be found on the following website:  
[https://drexel.edu/studentlife/community\\_standards/code-of-conduct/academic-integrity-policy/](https://drexel.edu/studentlife/community_standards/code-of-conduct/academic-integrity-policy/)

**Students with Disabilities:** If you experience any disability that requires individual accommodation to facilitate your participation and work in this course, I encourage you to reach out to Disability Resources. Disability Resources can be contacted at 215.895.1401 (phone), 215.895.1402 (fax), or via email at [disability@drexel.edu](mailto:disability@drexel.edu).

**Blackboard:** You must have a functional Blackboard account for this class. Readings will be posted on Blackboard and assignments and exams will be turned in via Blackboard. I will contact you via Blackboard. If your Blackboard account is not working, you can call 215.895.1224, email [itg@drexel.edu](mailto:itg@drexel.edu), or go to Korman Center Room 109.

**Save Copies of All Work:** You are required to save copies of all work completed over the course of the quarter. Although assignments will be submitted on Blackboard, it is very important that you also keep a copy, in case it does not upload properly.

#### **Other Policies & Notes**

- If your name is listed incorrectly on my course roster or there is another name you would like me to call you, please let me know. Students may also notify me of their gender pronouns. I use he/him pronouns.
- If you are struggling with any aspect of the course, please talk to me sooner rather than later so we can work on the ways to best help you. My email is listed at the top of this syllabus.
- If a religious holiday that you observe conflicts with an assignment or class attendance, please let me know in advance so that we may discuss alternate options and/or I can provide you with the slides and some notes to keep you caught up.
- **I promise I'm approachable and as invested in your success as you are. If you are having any issues, don't hesitate to reach out to me.**

## Academic Policies

This course follows all University academic policies. Your continued enrollment in the course means that you have read and agreed to follow these policies. Follow the link below to review the latest version of each policy.

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, Dishonesty, and Cheating:

[http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic\\_dishonesty.asp](http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic_dishonesty.asp)

Students with Disability Statement: <http://drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources/students>

Course Add/Drop Policy:

<http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-add-drop>

Course Withdrawal Policy: <http://drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-withdrawal>

## Grading

Grade scale: The grade equivalencies used in this course for individual assignments and final course grades are as follows:

- A+ Instructor's discretion
- A 93 & above
- A- 90-92.9
- B+ 87-89.9
- B 83-86.9
- B- 80-82.9
- C+ 77-79.9
- C 73-76.9
- C- 70-72.9
- D+ 67-69.9
- D 63-66.9
- F < 63

Grading rubric:

The general grading rubric used to assess written assignments submitted for the course is provided below. Certain assignments may have additional specific requirements that will be indicated in the materials for that particular project. The class participation grading rubric follows that for the written assignments.

**Grading rubric for written assignments**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Needs Improvement (C range and below)</b>	<b>Meets expectations (B range)</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations (A range)</b>
<b>Comprehension &amp; use of legal terms &amp; concepts</b>	Terms are used incorrectly or not at all.	Terms are generally used correctly, with some minor errors.	Terms are used correctly and strategically to advance the argument.
<b>Strength of arguments for position</b>	Writer focuses on moral/cultural not legal arguments; introduces irrelevant material; does not address legal defense of position; does not address relevant sources/arguments/history.	Author builds a good case for the argument, but shows room for improvement, such as missing/misusing precedents, lack of political or interpretive context for argument, lack of attention to historical development.	Author builds a strong case for the argument, citing appropriate legal texts, political context, methods of Constitutional interpretation, historical developments.
<b>Consideration of arguments against position</b>	Author does not anticipate or answer challenges to argument, misunderstands or mischaracterizes opponents' objections.	Author anticipates objections in most areas but does not fully address arguments to the contrary or provides unpersuasive answers.	Author takes into account and persuasively refutes arguments to the contrary, citing appropriate legal/interpretive principles, sources, developments
<b>Mechanics: writing style</b>	Paper shows significant problems: does not present a thesis, lacks organization at the paragraph/paper level, and/or does not construct a coherent argument.	Paper is generally well written, but shows room for improvement of thesis development, overall structure at the paragraph/paper level, or flow of argument.	Paper is well-written and argued, makes logical transitions, shows good overall structure of argument, fluid and compelling style.
<b>Mechanics: spelling, grammar, word choice, sentence structure</b>	Many errors; paper is difficult to read/comprehend because of poor writing.	Some errors but overall paper is clear and comprehensible.	Paper is well-written, with excellent presentation.

### Grading Rubric for Participation

A range	B range	C range	D range	F range
Actively supports, engages, and listens to peers in almost every class	Makes a sincere effort to interact with peers in most classes	Limited interaction with peers	Little interaction with peers	No interaction with peers
Arrives fully prepared at almost every session	Arrives mostly, if not fully prepared	Preparation and level of participation are inconsistent	Rarely prepared	Never prepared
Plays an active role in discussions	Participates constructively in discussions	When prepared, participates constructively in discussion.	Rarely participates	Never participates
Comments consistently improve the level and depth of class discussion	Makes relevant comments based on the assigned material	Makes relevant comments based on the assigned material	Comments are vague or off topic; occasionally shows noticeable lack of interest	Shows noticeable lack of engagement with the material
Student routinely invites dialogue; responds productively and thoughtfully in discussion with others; group dynamic and level of discussion are better because of the student's presence	Student usually engages in productive discussion with others; group dynamic and level of discussion are usually better because of the student's presence	Student sometimes engages with others; does not invite or respond to discussion; group dynamic and level of discussion are not affected by the student's presence	Student does not engage in discussion with others; interrupts or talks over others; group dynamic and level of discussion are negatively affected by the student's presence.	Student is not engaged in class discussion; makes comments that are detrimental to classroom environment; group dynamic and level of discussion are very negatively affected by the student's presence

Adapted from Adam Chapnick, "A Participation Rubric," *The Teaching Professor*. March 2005, p. 4

In the interest of lending some clarity to how I grade participation, this is my approach: You will see Class Participation is worth 10% of your grade. I do not want to *force* anyone to participate just to avoid a grade penalty – thus, starting from the first class, each student has a 5/10 for participation. Egregiously disruptive behavior could see that score reduced, but in my experience that has been a rarity.

Those students who choose to participate will gain additional points (up to a possible 10/10) according to the above-referenced rubric. However, you will notice that the grade breakdown leaves ample opportunity for a student that does not feel comfortable speaking up in class to nonetheless earn a high grade – up to 95% in the course.

## COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Please note, the schedule and assignments are subject to change – check your email for any announcements as the course progresses.

<u>Week</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Due Dates/ Anything Special</u>
<u>1</u>	April 1 & 3	Introduction, “Law” Generally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Judicial Process in America (JPIA)</u>, Chapter 1</li> <li>• Dolbeare &amp; Medcalf, “The Dark Side of the Constitution” (<i>PDF on Blackboard</i>)</li> <li>• “Philosophize This!” Podcast episode #192 – “<a href="#">Should we overthrow the government tomorrow? – Anarchism Pt. 1 (Chomsky, Malatesta)</a>” (approximately 33 minutes, transcript available on website)</li> <li>• Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy – “<a href="#">Libertarianism</a>” (skim)</li> </ul>	
<u>2</u>	April 8 & 10	The Federal Judiciary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JPIA, Ch. 2, “The Federal Judicial System”</li> <li>• JPIA, Ch. 6, “Federal Judges”</li> <li>• JPIA, Ch. 7, “Policy Links among the Citizenry, the President, and the Federal Judiciary”</li> </ul>	<b>Distribution of first paper prompt on April 10<sup>th</sup></b>
<u>3</u>	April 15 & 17	State Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JPIA, Ch. 3, “State Judicial Systems”</li> <li>• JPIA, Ch. 5, “State Judges”</li> </ul>	<b>First response paper is due on April 17<sup>th</sup></b>
<u>4</u>	April 22 & 24	Civil Cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JPIA, Ch. 11, “The Civil Court Process”</li> </ul>	
<u>5</u>	April 29 & May 1	Criminal Cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JPIA, Ch. 10, “The Criminal Trial &amp; Its Aftermath”</li> </ul>	<p><b>At-home midterm on May 1<sup>st</sup> (NO CLASS)</b></p> <p><b>Distribution of second paper prompt on May 1<sup>st</sup></b></p>

<u>6</u>	May 6 & 8	Regulatory Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immigration Readings on Blackboard</li> <li>• Environmental Law Readings on Blackboard</li> </ul>	<b>Second response paper is due on May 8<sup>th</sup></b>
<u>7</u>	May 13 & 15	Constitutional Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitutional Law Readings on Blackboard</li> </ul>	<b>Distribution of third paper prompt on May 15<sup>th</sup></b>
<u>8</u>	May 20 & 22	Lawyers, Clients & Legal Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JPIA, Ch. 8, “Lawyers, Litigants, and Interest Groups in the Judicial Process”</li> </ul>	<b>Third response paper is due on May 22<sup>nd</sup></b>
<u>9</u>	May 27 & 29	Alternatives To Litigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediation Readings on Blackboard</li> </ul>	
<u>10</u>	June 3 & 5	Spillover Classes		
<u>11</u>	June 10 & 12	Review Sessions		<b>Final Exam Released Finals Week</b>