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PSC 370.01: Courts and Judicial Politics

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Political Science 370
Courts and Judicial Politics
Spring 2002

Instructor: Jim Lopach, LA 348, 243-4829

Text

Walter F. Murphy, C. Herman Pritchett, and Lee Epstein Court, Judges, and Politics, 5th ed., 2002

Course Overview

The purposes of this course are to provide an introduction to the workings of the judicial branch of government and to explore the role of the federal judiciary in the American political system. Students will be expected to read approximately 15 pages in the text for each class meeting and be prepared to participate in discussion. The class format will be discussion rather than lecture, with the instructor acting as discussion leader. The learning goals are student understanding of the judiciary's procedural and structural features, accurate analysis of course readings, and effective oral and written expression.

Term Paper

Each student is required to write a term paper of no more than seven double-spaced pages of actual text. Suggestions for term paper topics are attached; the instructor must approve each student's selection. The introductory paragraph of the paper, a topical outline of the paper, and a list of sources to be used are due on March 7. The introductory paragraph should include a statement of your purpose, an overview of the paper's contents, a brief discussion of the topic's importance, and your likely conclusions. Because PSc 370 is a "writing" course, the instructor will correct the introductory paragraph and return it for revision and inclusion in the final paper, which is due on April 25. Documentation of sources used can be included in parenthetical text notes tied to the bibliography, footnotes and a bibliography, or end notes and a bibliography. Grading criteria will be accuracy of content, coherence of argument, and correctness of writing.

Examination

There will be two examinations, a midterm and a final. The final examination will cover course material from the midterm examination to the end of the quarter. Both examinations will use definition and short-essay questions. The midterm examination will be held on March 14, and the final examination is scheduled for Monday, May 13, at 8:00 a.m.

Grading

Class attendance and recitation	- 10% (20 points)	A = 180-200 points
Term paper	- 30% (60 points)	B = 160-179 points
Midterm examination	- 30% (60 points)	C = 140-159 points
Final examination	- 30% (60 points)	D = 120-139 points
		F = -119 points

SUGGESTIONS FOR TERM PAPERS

1. Plea bargaining - roles of various actors and arguments for and against
2. Alternate dispute resolution - history of ADR with examples and critique
3. Sentencing - legislative control and judicial discretion; U.S. Sentencing Commission; Mistretta v. U.S (488 U.S. 361); Wash. Post, 10/96

4. Juvenile justice system - evolution, criticisms, jurisdiction, functions, procedures, case load, appeal, reform alternatives
5. Judicial review - its justification in a representative democracy and criticisms; use two of the following: Robert H. Bork, The Tempting of America; Jesse H. Choper, Judicial Review and the National Political Process; John Hart Ely, Democracy and Distrust; Alexander M. Bickel, The Least Dangerous Branch; David M. O'Brien, Storm Center; Lawrence H. Tribe, God Save This Honorable Court
6. Judicial contempt power - civil contempt and criminal contempt and a comparison of the two
7. Judicial selection - comparison of the elective system and the appointive system with emphasis on the judiciary article in the 1972 Montana Constitution and the debate in the Montana Constitutional Convention
8. Decisionmaking on the U.S. Supreme Court - use two of the following: Walter Murphy, Elements of Judicial Strategy; Bob Woodward, The Brethren; David O'Brien, Storm Center; Edward Lazarus, Closed Chambers; Phillip Cooper, Battles on the Bench
9. Office of Montana Attorney General - organization, duties, workload, budget, governmental relationships, staffing, achievements, problems, the incumbent
10. Office of Missoula City Attorney - same sub-topics as for #9
11. Office of Missoula County Attorney - same sub-topics as for #9
12. Public defender - in Missoula County and Missoula federal district court: funding, duties, pay, staffing, workload, examples of cases, clients, record in court, alternatives, comparison of the two offices
13. ASUM Legal Services - same sub-topics as for #12
14. Legal education - history and evolution, alternatives, recent innovations, Montana Law School curriculum project
15. Montana Judicial Standards Commission - authorization in law, organization, purpose, duties, principles of judicial ethics, discipline of Montana judges
16. Montana Commission on Practice - authorization in law, organization, purpose, duties, principles of lawyer ethics, discipline of the Montana bar
17. Television and trials - philosophy of open procedures and conflict with judicial efficiency and effectiveness; lessons from O.J. Simpson case
18. Justice of the peace court - authorization in law, tradition, jurisdiction, functions, procedures, case load, decision making, appeal, administration, staffing, budget, criticisms, reform alternatives, observation of a case
19. Montana district court - same as for #18
20. U.S. district court - same as for #18
21. Montana Supreme Court - same as for #18
22. Law firm - comparison of two law firms from perspectives of staffing, clients, organization, specializations, administration, resources, pro bono work
23. Jury - tradition and philosophy, jury's role vs. judge's role, selection procedure and use of social scientists, behavior of members, size and unanimity requirements, jury nullification, special juries (89 Yale L.J. 1155), reform proposals

24. Grand jury - purpose and tradition, roles, procedures, alternatives, use by Kenneth Starr in Clinton scandal, reform proposals
25. Representational litigation - amicus curiae briefs, class action suits, test cases, litigating groups such as ACLU, NAACP, Sierra Club, Rocky Mountain Legal Foundation
26. Judicial biography - review of judicial behavior literature and comparison of the Supreme Court Justice's background to decisions and opinions on Court:

a. William H. Rehnquist	l. Oliver Wendell Holmes
b. Thurgood Marshall	m. Sandra Day O'Connor
c. Warren E. Burger	n. Abe Fortas
d. William J. Brennan	o. Harry Blackmun
e. John Marshall Harlan	p. Louis Brandeis
f. William O. Douglas	q. John Marshall
g. Earl Warren	r. Roger B. Taney
h. Felix Frankfurter	s. Clarence Thomas
i. Hugo Black	t. Charles E. Hughes
j. Benjamin Cardozo	u. Ruth Bader Ginsburg
27. Indian courts - tribal government courts, organization, authorization, jurisdiction, conflicts with state courts, staffing, problems, reform proposals
28. Office of U.S. Solicitor General - history, duties, official relationships, contribution to U.S. Supreme Court, examples of incumbents
29. Law clerks - purpose, duties, and influence, especially on the U.S. Supreme Court (e.g., see W.O. Douglas, The Court Years; D. O'Brien, Storm Center; Tinsley E. Yarbrough, The Rehnquist Court and the Constitution; John Oakley, Law Clerks and the Judicial Process)
30. Advertising by lawyers - history, 1st amendment issues, kinds of advertising, ethical issues, effectiveness; ban-on-attorney-solicitation case (132 L Ed 2d 541)
31. U.S. Tax Court - purpose and duties, organization and procedures, critique
32. Child custody proceeding - description and critique with reform suggestions (e.g., 1996 Montana Domestic Relations Study Commission)
33. Jurisprudence - analysis of one of the major schools or movements in jurisprudence (e.g., review writings of Roscoe Pound, Benjamin Cardozo, Jerome Frank, Andrea Dworkin, Robert Bork, Catherine MacKinnon, Richard Posner):

a. original intent	c. sociological jurisprudence
b. law and economics	d. feminist jurisprudence
34. Court martial - principal features of military courts and their relationship to federal judicial system; military tribunal proposal
35. Selection of U.S. Supreme Court Justices - commentary on the process by a case study of the Robert Bork controversy or the Clarence Thomas controversy
36. U.S. Independent Counsel - reasons for the office, constitutionality upheld (Morrison v. Olson, 487 U.S. 654), criticisms of office, reform options, 1999 Congressional debate, termination of office
37. History of the U.S. Supreme Court - analysis of one era, e.g.: Herman Schwartz, The Burger Years; Bernard Schwartz, The Unpublished Opinions of the Warren Court; E. Vincent Blasi, The Burger Court; C. Herman Pritchett, The Roosevelt Court; Tinsley E. Yarbrough, The Rehnquist Court and the Constitution; Mark Tushnet, The Warren Court; William Leuchtenburg, The Supreme Court Reborn... in the Age of Roosevelt