

# PSCI A190: INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEM

Item	Value
Curriculum Committee Approval Date	11/13/2024
Top Code	220700 - Political Science
Units	3 Total Units
Hours	54 Total Hours (Lecture Hours 54)
Total Outside of Class Hours	0
Course Credit Status	Credit: Degree Applicable (D)
Material Fee	No
Basic Skills	Not Basic Skills (N)
Repeatable	No
Open Entry/Open Exit	No
Grading Policy	Standard Letter (S), • Pass/No Pass (B)
Associate Arts Local General Education (GE)	• Area 4 Social and Behavioral Sciences 4B Social and Economic Institutions (OD2)
Associate Science Local General Education (GE)	• Area 4 Social and Behavioral Sciences (OSD)
California State University General Education Breadth (CSU GE-Breadth)	• CSU D8 Political Science (D8)

## Course Description

An overview of the American legal system, its structure, and history. Reviews many aspects of the law and judicial process: the adversarial system, powers and jurisdiction of the federal and state courts, judicial review, legal education, the legal profession, and other related topics. Transfer Credit: CSU; UC.

## Course Objectives

1. Compare and contrast the inquisitorial and adversarial systems.
2. Describe the relationship between the different types of law and define them.
3. Explain the common law and civil law systems and why the U.S. utilizes the former.
4. Discuss the development of the American judiciary.
5. Evaluate the relationship between the federal courts and state courts, emphasizing the state of California.
6. Identify the powers and jurisdiction of federal courts. Identify the powers and jurisdiction of California courts.
7. Analyze the significance of judicial review.
8. Describe the structure of the federal appellate court system, concluding with the Supreme Court.
9. Discuss the debate regarding judicial policymaking.
10. Provide an overview of legal training in the United States.
11. Define due process and explain the criminal justice system.
12. Describe the stages of a criminal trial including the impact of plea bargaining on the courts.

13. Provide an overview of civil litigation and describe the courts that compose the civil justice system and administrative bodies.
14. Examine the requirements for filing a class action lawsuit and assess the potential impact of a ruling.

## Lecture Content

1. Introduction to Law and Justice a. Law: Define b. Natural Law c. Rational Law 2. Systems of Law and Justice a. Common/Case Law b. Equity c. Civil Law d. Courts and Judges in the United States and Civil Law Countries e. Inquisitorial and Adversarial Systems 3. Early History of the American Judicial System a. Law and Courts in Colonial America b. The Revolution c. Courts after the Revolution d. Law and Justice on the Frontier e. The Constitution and the Supreme Court f. The Impact of John Marshall and the Marshall Court 4. The Structure and Administration of the Dual Court System a. Jurisdiction nb sp; b. State Court Systems c. California Court System d. Federal Court System e. Judicial Administration and Reform f. Administrative Reform 5. The Appellate Process and Judicial Review a. The Appellate Process b. Judicial Review and the Supreme Court c. Implementation of Judicial Decisions 6. Judicial Interpretation and Policymaking a. Interpreting the Constitution b. Interpreting Statutes c. The Policymaking Role of the Judicial Branch d. Administrative Agencies and Judicial Policymaking 7. Legal Professions; Education, Selection, Duties and Responsibilities a. Judges, Federal and State b. Prosecutors, Federal and State c. Solicitor General n bsp; d. Criminal Defense Attorney -Private Defense -Public Defender -Assigned Counsel 8. Criminal Justice a. Due Process b. Pretrial Procedures c. Rough Justice in the Lower Courts d. Felony Cases e. Trial, Sentencing, Appeals, Probation, Parole and Executive Clemency f. Plea Bargaining 9. Civil Justice a. Civil Litigation and Adjudication b. The Civil Process c. Specialized Courts and Administrative Bodies d. Class Action Lawsuits

## Method(s) of Instruction

- Lecture (02)
- DE Live Online Lecture (02S)
- DE Online Lecture (02X)

## Instructional Techniques

1. Daily lesson agendas. 2. Lecture and explanation of topics. 3. Verbal feedback to student questions. 4. Written feedback on assignments. 5. Students will work cooperatively to clarify and discuss issues. 6. Organized, general classroom discussion. 7. Documentaries to illustrate course material.

## Reading Assignments

Assigned reading from text and other sources. 2 hours per week.

## Writing Assignments

Writing assignments will be required of students to demonstrate analysis of the principles of the American legal system. Students will respond to questions provided by the instructor on paper assignments or in written examinations as the instructor deems appropriate. Said assignments will require student to demonstrate higher-order thinking: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. 2 hours per week.

## Out-of-class Assignments

Homework and class work as necessary to reinforce course material. 2 hours per week.

## **Demonstration of Critical Thinking**

Various methods of evaluation will be used to observe or measure students achievement of course outcomes and objectives including critical thinking skills. These could include but are not limited to quizzes, exams, essays, field journals, projects, critical analysis papers, service learning, simulations, research demonstrations, etc.

## **Required Writing, Problem Solving, Skills Demonstration**

Writing assignments will be required of students to demonstrate analysis of the principles of the American legal system. Students will respond to questions provided by the instructor on paper assignments or in written examinations as the instructor deems appropriate. Said assignments will require student to demonstrate higher-order thinking: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

## **Eligible Disciplines**

Political science: Master's degree in political science, government, or international relations OR bachelor's degree in any of the above AND master's degree in economics, history, public administration, social science, sociology, any ethnic studies, J.D., or LL.B. OR the equivalent. Master's degree required.

## **Textbooks Resources**

1. Required Lippman, M.. Law and Society, 3 ed. Chicago: University of Illinois, 2020 2. Required Schubert, F. A. . Introduction to Law and the Legal System, 12 ed. Cengage, 2023