



# INTRODUCTION TO LAW

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH | POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

Political Science 253 (3 credits) | MWF 10:20–11:20 | Sage Hall 1239 | Spring 2017

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the study of law. It will provide students with a basic understanding of the American legal system and how to study law. The course surveys several areas of law including Constitutional law, torts, contracts, property, and employment discrimination. Students also learn the fundamentals of legal analysis and writing.

## PROFESSOR INFO

Jerry D. Thomas  
 J.D., Chicago-Kent College of Law  
 Ph.D., University of Kentucky  
 M.P.A., University of South Carolina

E-mail: [thomasj@uwosh.edu](mailto:thomasj@uwosh.edu)  
 Office: Sage Hall 4619  
 Office Hours: MWF 11:30–1:00  
 or by appointment

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### *Legal Studies Learning Outcomes*

- Describe the structure of courts and legal systems in the U.S.
- Critically read and evaluate legal cases
- Conduct legal analyses (apply legal rules to new situations to formulate legal conclusions)
- Research legal and policy issues, including enacted law, common law, and legal scholarship
- Brief cases

### *Essential Learning Outcomes*

This course focuses on three UWO essential learning outcomes for students.

- Identify and objectively evaluate legal theories and assumptions
- Think critically and creatively about law
- Communicate orally and in writing arguments and ideas about law and policy.

### *Political Science Department Learning Goals*

This course focuses on developing students' analytical skills (using legal analyses), written communication (case briefs and written analyses on exams), oral communication (expressing legal arguments during class), and critical examination and application of theory (applying legal arguments, which are theoretical arguments, to new situations).

---

## COURSE ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING

I use the 93/90/87 grading scale for this course.

A	93–100	B-	80–82	D+	67–69
A-	90–92	C+	77–79	D	63–66
B+	87–89	C	73–76	D-	60–62
B	83–86	C-	70–72	F	0–59

**Exams** (3 exams x 20% = 60%)—Objective, short-answer, and essay/issue-spotter questions.

**Assignments** (20%)—Homework assignments and in-class activities. Examples include one-page papers, mini-research assignments, and case briefs.

**Participation** (20%)—Good participation means a student reads and prepares before class and participates actively in discussions. Participation comfort levels vary substantially. At one end of the spectrum, some students fear public speaking (more than death) and would prefer to remain anonymous in class. These students should work actively to overcome this fear. On the other end of the spectrum are gunners. Gunners are eager to speak and tend to dominate conversation. These students should be mindful that learning involves active listening and should provide others an opportunity to speak. Quality of participation is as important as quantity. Students receive best participation grades when they demonstrate critical thinking and when they assimilate complex ideas, including classmates' ideas, across a range of topics. Such participators contribute meaningfully to the learning of others, including the professor.

---

## INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

Law affects all citizens irrespective of race, gender, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, national origin, ethnicity, religion, physical and learning ability, and myriad other characteristics with which students identify. Hence, this course incorporates inclusive excellence pedagogies and activities. *Input from all students is valued and expected.*

---

## CLASS GUIDELINES

I have four principles I ask students to observe in class. Be *honest, energetic, reliable, and respectful.*

---

## D2L

Students are required to use D2L. For questions about training or for technical assistance, call the UW help desk at (920) 424–3020.

---

## ATTENDANCE

Attendance is expected. I take attendance at the beginning of each class, mainly to learn student names. Remember, participation is required. You cannot participate if you are absent. Absences are sometimes necessary. If you are absent, it is unnecessary to e-mail or contact me, unless it is an extended absence. It is your responsibility to contact a classmate for any missed notes or assignments. I do not supply notes or conduct one-on-one lectures. I am always happy to meet with students to review unclear points.

---

## DEADLINES AND MISSED ASSIGNMENTS

Students are expected to turn in assignments on the due dates. Students who miss assignments will be excused only if they have a bona-fide reason according to university policy (e.g., documented illness, family death, university-sponsored activity). In short, turn in assignments on time. If you are unable to do this, please contact me to discuss your individual situation. *I do not accept case briefs after I have gone over them in class.*

---

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

UWO is committed to a standard of academic integrity for all students. The system guidelines state, “Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others’ academic endeavors.” Students are subject to disciplinary action for academic misconduct. Students on the UWO campus have been suspended from the university for academic misconduct. Students are encouraged to review the procedures related to violations of academic honesty as outlined in Chapter UWS 14, Wisconsin Administrative Code, available on the Dean of Students website at [www.uwosh.edu/stuaff/policies-procedures](http://www.uwosh.edu/stuaff/policies-procedures). Specific questions regarding the code (and institutional procedures approved to implement the code) should be directed to the Dean of Students Office.

---

## TEXTBOOK

Currier and Eimermann, *The Study of Law: A Critical Thinking Approach* (3rd Edition) (**required**) ISBN: 978-1-4548-0875-6

Other readings will be available electronically at no additional cost to students.

---

## SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

### Week 1 (Jan. 30)

Introductions, D2L profile, legal analysis, parts of a case, briefing cases. Study of Law (Ch. 1)

### Week 2 (Feb. 6)

Functions and Sources of Law (Ch. 2)

### Week 3 (Feb. 13)

Classification of the Law (Ch. 3), Federalism

### Week 4 (Feb. 20)

Court System and Role of Judges (Ch. 4)

### Week 5 (Feb. 27)

Review, Legal Analysis, and Exam 1

### Week 6 (March 6)

Constitutional Law (Ch. 6)

### Week 7 (March 13)

Constitutional Law (Civil Rights & Liberties)

### Week 8 (March 20)

Spring Break

### Week 9 (March 27)

Torts (Ch. 7)

### Week 10 (Apr. 3)

Review and Exam 2

### Week 11 (Apr. 10)

Contract Law (Ch. 8)

### Week 12 (Apr. 17)

Special Topic in Law (Current Events TBD)

### Week 13 (Apr. 24)

Property Law (Ch. 9)

### Week 14 (May 1)

Employment Law (Ch. 10)

### Week 15 (May 8)

Wrap-up and exam 3

---

## CAMPUS RESOURCES

*I want you to be successful.* To read about campus services available to support your success, please visit [www.uwosh.edu/home/resources](http://www.uwosh.edu/home/resources). Here are a few key resources that may be helpful.

**Center for Academic Resources:** The Center for Academic Resources (CAR) provides free, confidential tutoring for students in most undergraduate classes on campus. CAR is located in the Student Success Center, Suite 102. Check the Tutor List page on CAR's website ([www.uwosh.edu/car](http://www.uwosh.edu/car)) for a list of tutors. If your course is not listed, click on a link to request one, stop by the Center, or call 424-2290. To schedule a tutoring session, simply email the tutor, let him/her know what class you are seeking assistance in, and schedule a time to meet.

**Writing Center:** The Writing Center helps students of all ability levels improve their writing. Trained peer consultants help writers understand an assignment, envision possibilities for a draft, and improve their writing process. They even help writers learn to identify their own proofreading errors. Students can make a free appointment or stop by to see whether a consultant is available. For more information, view their website ([www.uwosh.edu/wcenter](http://www.uwosh.edu/wcenter)), call 424-1152, email [wcenter@uwosh.edu](mailto:wcenter@uwosh.edu), or visit them in Suite 102 of the Student Success Center.

**Reading Study Center:** The Reading Study Center is an all-university service whose mission is to facilitate the development of efficient college-level learning strategies in students of all abilities. The center offers strategies for improved textbook study, time management, note-taking, test preparation, and test-taking. For more info, email [readingstudy@uwosh.edu](mailto:readingstudy@uwosh.edu), view the website ([www.uwosh.edu/readingstudycenter](http://www.uwosh.edu/readingstudycenter)), visit them in Nursing Ed Room 201, or call 424-1031.

**Polk Library:** Polk Library has many professional librarians who can help you find library resources for your research. Ted Mulvey, the Information Literacy Librarian, is available to assist you as you access, evaluate, and use information. Contact him at 424-7329 or [mulveyt@uwosh.edu](mailto:mulveyt@uwosh.edu). You may also set up a research advisory session with a librarian at [rap@uwosh.edu](mailto:rap@uwosh.edu).