

Introduction to U.S. Legal Systems
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA LEVIN COLLEGE OF LAW
FALL 2024 SYLLABUS – LAW 7932 – 2 CREDITS LL.M.

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

MEETING TIME: Mondays 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm

LOCATION: 285D Holland Hall

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

This seminar is an introductory exploration of the fundamental principles of U.S. law and legal systems. It is intended to prepare and assist international students in gaining maximum benefit from the pursuit of LL.M. studies at the University of Florida Levin College of Law. Through readings and discussion we will examine different branches and levels of government, historical happenings and approaches, the role of the 4th estate and administrative functions, legal professionalism, and more.

Successful advocacy, whether for a client or a cause, requires effective communication informed by an understanding of surrounding dynamics. Many classes and assignments will include discussion of timely issues that illustrate theory and reality. Be aware and informed about the community and larger world around you. Come to class prepared to participate, to share your experience and perspective, and to learn from one another.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Basic understanding of the legal systems of the United States
- Basic understanding of some general areas of law
- Recognize, understand and explain different roles and responsibilities within U.S. legal systems
- Identify and understand competing objectives within a legal framework
- Maximize LL.M. educational experience given personal interests and goals

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK & COURSE MATERIALS:

William Burnham & Stephen F. Reed, *Introduction to the Law and Legal System of the United States* (7th edition, 2020). Additional materials will be available on the Canvas course site.

Please be sure to register for the Canvas course and have any required materials with you in print or easily accessible electronic form in class. All students are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to class. All students are responsible for checking the Canvas course page on a regular basis for class updates, announcements, assignments, or adjustments.

GRADING EVALUATION:

This class is graded by letter grade. There is no grading curve. Your final grade will be based on the following allocation:

Short Reflection Papers	20%
Midterm	25%
Final Exam	35%
Participation	20%

You must complete all assignments to pass the course.

CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Attendance in class is required by both the ABA and the Law School. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class meeting. Please be on time. However, late attendance is preferred over no attendance. A student arriving late is responsible for following up with me after class to ensure that they are not recorded as absent.

Life happens unexpectedly at times. Each student is allowed one unexcused absence. Excused absences are according to UF Law policy. As a courtesy, please notify me in advance of an upcoming absence when possible. A student who fails to meet the attendance requirement will be dropped from the course. The law school’s policy on attendance can be found [here](#).

COMPLIANCE WITH UF HONOR CODE:

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Law Honor Code located [here](#). The UF Law Honor Code also prohibits use of artificial intelligence, including, but not limited to, ChatGPT and Harvey, to assist in completing quizzes, exams, papers, or other assessments unless expressly authorized by the professor to do so.

INFORMATION ON UF LAW GRADING POLICIES:

The Levin College of Law’s mean and mandatory distributions are posted on the College’s website and this class adheres to that posted grading policy. The following chart describes the specific letter grade/grade point equivalent in place:

Letter Grade	Point Equivalent	Letter Grade	Point Equivalent
A (Excellent)	4.0	C (Satisfactory)	2.0
A-	3.67	C-	1.67
B+	3.33	D+	1.33
B	3.0	D (Poor)	1.0
B-	2.67	D-	0.67
C+	2.33	E (Failure)	0.0

The law school grading policy is available [here](#).

OBSERVANCE OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS:

UF Law respects students’ [observance of religious holidays](#).

- Students, upon prior notification to their instructors, shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith.
- Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence.
- Students shall not be penalized due to absence from class or other scheduled academic activity because of religious observances.

EXAM DELAYS AND ACCOMMODATIONS:

The law school policy on exam delays and accommodations can be found [here](#).

STATEMENT RELATED TO ACCOMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students requesting accommodations for disabilities must first register with the Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/>). Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to the Assistant Dean for Student Life (Assistant Dean Brian Mitchell). Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester. Students may access information about various resources on the UF Law Student Resources Canvas page, available at <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/427635>.

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Click [here](#) for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and may complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students [here](#).

RECORDINGS OF CLASS

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor and Student Conduct Code.

ABA OUT-OF-CLASS HOURS REQUIREMENTS: ABA Standard 310 requires that students devote 120 minutes to out-of-class preparation for every “classroom hour” of in-class instruction. Each weekly class is approximately 2 hours in length, requiring at least 4 hours of preparation. Preparation time for class and assignments includes reading or viewing the material, thinking about the material, synthesizing your knowledge with the material, completing assignments, etc. Be prepared to be called upon, and to lead and engage in discussion.

COURSE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

This syllabus is offered as a guide to the direction of the course. Our pace will depend in part on the level of interest and the level of difficulty of each section and is subject to change.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION	
Week 1 Monday, Aug. 19	<i>Class 1: Introduction & Overview: Be prepared to introduce yourself, ask and answer questions, and discuss the reading material</i> <i>Required Readings:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Syllabus• Burnham Chapter 1 pg.1-57