

Constitutional Law 5501-14002 § 2
University of Florida Levin College of Law
Syllabus & Reading Assignments Spring
2026 (4 credit hours)

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Classroom

Office Hours: Mondays 3:00-5:00 or drop by or set appointment

First Day Assignment:

Course Description and Objectives:

This course covers the following topics:

- Article III, judicial review, and judicial power
- Article I, national legislative power, usually including the federal commerce power
- Article II, national executive power in the domestic sphere
- Federalism-based limitations on state power (including the Commerce Clause and dormant Commerce Clause)
- 14th Amendment/5th Amendment, due process, including related theories of implied rights; privileges and immunities
- 14th Amendment, equal protection
- 2nd Amendment

My objectives (that is, intended results of instruction) for you in this course are as follows. You will:

- Know the “[black-letter rules](#)/doctrines” of Constitutional Law regarding the topics listed above.
- Apply the “black-letter rules” of Constitutional Law to new fact patterns, with the understanding that minor changes in the facts can change outcomes.
- Be able to analyze Supreme Court decisions in a sophisticated manner, with appreciation for various [interpretive methodologies](#) that influence constitutional decisions, including textualism, originalism, pragmatism, stare decisis, structuralism, and so forth.
- Understand the currents of American history from the Nation’s founding to the present that have influenced the shape of today’s Constitutional Law.
- Understand the procedural law underlying Supreme Court decisions
- Learn basic and then more sophisticated templates for approaching constitutional analysis. As a lawyer, knowing what questions to ask can be even more important than knowing definitive answers.

Student Learning Outcomes:

In the quizzes and exams in this course, you will demonstrate what you are learning by:

- Identifying and stating clearly the black-letter rules in Constitutional Law that apply to novel fact patterns I will give you
- Making and identifying arguments based on the interpretive methodologies used by the Supreme Court
- Demonstrating understanding of Supreme Court procedure, such as the process of [granting certiorari](#); discerning how votes align to create majorities or pluralities in complex cases;
- Be able to discuss how the Nation's history has influenced Constitutional Law
- Be able to analyze cases using systematic analytical tools (or templates).

Required Book:

The assigned casebook is GREGORY E. MAGGS & PETER J. SMITH, CONSTITUTIONAL LAW: A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH (6th ed. 2023), ISBN: 9781684675715. Please be sure to register for the Canvas page for this course. Please bring required book to class every day.

Course Expectations: Class Participation and Professionalism:

Participation in classroom discussion is crucial to your success in learning Constitutional Law. I will employ various strategies to encourage and incentivize your participation, including the use of iClicker for polling, quizzing, and attendance. You will need to download the iClicker software onto your phone.

I will use the Socratic method: I will call on students randomly to answer questions. You can notify me before class if you have experienced an illness or emergency that prevented you from preparing for the class and thus do not want to be called on for a particular class. If I call on you and you say you are unprepared, I will circle back to you the following day. I employ this method to encourage you to read the material carefully. Although I had moved away from the Socratic Method over the last few years, I am returning to it to enhance critical thinking and engagement in our classroom. I strive to model the legal reasoning process, generate discussion of the type you might have with a colleague or partner in your law firm, and allow the class to gain from the insights of those who may be reticent to volunteer. I have high expectations for your performance in this class and your eventual performance as attorneys.

Typical questions I will ask about each case are as follows: What are the facts? What portion of the Constitution is implicated? What was the holding? What was the rationale? What interpretative methodology or methodologies did the Court use to support its rationale? How many votes supported the holding? Was there a dissent? Upon what interpretive methodology did the dissent rely? Why did the parties want to pursue this case? Why did the Court limit its holding? How did the historical or social context of the case shape the decision? If the facts of the case were changed in some respect, would the case come out differently? How would you have argued this case if you represented the parties? What interpretive methodology would you have relied on to persuade the Court? What are the effects of the Court's decision? What important issues are left open by the Court's decision?

As you can see, I am interested in teaching you how to make "constitutional" arguments—arguments that other lawyers would recognize as appropriate for resolving contested issues of constitutional law. That said, the contents of this course will inevitably touch on your personal and

political beliefs and even matters you may consider fundamental to your identity: we will be discussing abortion, gun control, affirmative action, and other important but potentially polarizing issues. We will also be discussing the painful history of discrimination in our country. I ask you to practice empathy and be sensitive to the different experiences, perspectives, and opinions your classmates may bring to our discussions. One of the skills that you must develop as a lawyer is how to have respectful discussions with others when you have significant differences of personal or political opinion, and I am going to do my best to model those skills in the classroom. To that end, you may find me articulating arguments or perspectives that I deem to be missing from our discussion, or you may find that I call on you to articulate the “other side.” I challenge you to learn to articulate arguments that do not comport with your own personal or political beliefs, because this is an essential legal skill. If you feel that one of our discussions has missed an important perspective but you feel uncomfortable articulating that perspective, you may email me, and I may circle back to include it without attribution to you. I ask you to be thoughtful (in both senses of that word), be self-critical, presume (rebuttably) your classmates are engaging in discussion in good faith, and listen carefully and respectfully to all views.

Law School Success: To be successful in law school, you will need to develop (1) knowledge of the law; (2) cognitive skills such as reasoning, critical reading, analysis, attention span, memory, and issue identification, and (3) non-cognitive skills. Non-cognitive skills include academic behaviors such as organization, class attendance and participation, completion of assignments, and effective studying strategies. Non-cognitive skills also include academic mindsets that encourage persistence in the face of difficulty; to achieve this mindset, you will need to embrace a belief that you belong here; that your efforts will lead to growth in your skills and knowledge; that your efforts are valuable; and that your efforts will lead to success. A goal of law school is to make you an expert learner. I will talk about strategies used by expert learners throughout the class. If you want to learn more, I suggest you read the book *Make It Stick*.

Course Expectations: Class Attendance Policy:

Please let me know if you will miss class or have missed class. You may miss four classes without excuse. If you miss more than four classes without a valid excuse, you will be dropped from the class and must retake Constitutional Law.

Please do not arrive late to class if you can avoid it. Let me know if you must leave early. Please turn off your cell phone during class and focus on what is happening in the classroom. I reserve the right to lower your final grade if you engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment for your classmates.

Course Expectations: Grading Evaluation--Methods by which students will be evaluated:

I will evaluate your performance in this class based on your performance on the final exam and completion of one in-class quiz assigned during the semester. Everyone who completes the quiz will get the full range of points available. Failure to complete the quiz will result in a deduction of 10 points from your final exam score. The final exam will be scored on a scale of 200 points (50 points per essay question).

Final Exam Format: Your final exam in this course will be a 4-hour, in-class exam. I will allow you to bring in one 8.5 by 11 piece of paper with notes (sometimes referred to as a “cheat sheet”). It will consist of four essay questions worth 50 points each. It will not be space-limited, but you will find it very time-pressured. I will provide you with the instructions for the final exam on the Canvas Page for this course approximately one week before the final exam date.

Exam Delays and Accommodations

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

Information on UF Law Grading Policies

This course follows the Levin College of Law's grading policies found [here](#).

Letter Grade Point Equivalent

A 4.0

A- 3.67

B+ 3.33

B 3.0

B- 2.67

C+ 2.33

C 2.0

C- 1.67

D+ 1.33

D 1.0

D- 0.67

E (Failure) 0.0

Online Course Evaluation Process:

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. 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.bluer.com/ufl/>.

Recordings of Class Discussions.

All classes will be recorded via Mediasite in case students must miss class for health reasons. The Office of Student Affairs will work with faculty to determine when students may have access to these recordings, and the recordings will be password protected. It is the student's responsibility to contact the Office of Student Affairs as soon as possible after an absence.

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. According to ABA Standard 310, given that we will have four "classroom hours" per week, at least 8 hours of preparation are required outside of class. However, the reading load in Constitutional Law is, of necessity, heavy. It is probably heavier than your other classes this semester because the Supreme Court writes such lengthy opinions. You may find that the time you need to spend reading exceeds the time required by ABA Standard 310, especially during the first month of so of class as you become accustomed to reading Supreme Court opinions. I have tried to be cognizant of the reading burden in setting the assignments for class.

Academic Honesty and COMPLIANCE WITH UF HONOR CODE:

As future members of the legal profession, I expect you to conduct yourself with the highest degree of integrity, truthfulness, professionalism, and respect for the rules and the dignity of others. Any dishonesty or attempt to gain unfair advantage while in law school will be scrutinized by the Bar in determining whether you will gain admission. Act accordingly.

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.

UF ACADEMIC POLICIES AND RESOURCES:

Other information about UF academic policies and resources can be found at [this link](#).

Health and Wellness Resources:

- U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as noncrisis services.
- Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need or visit the Student Health Care Center website.
- University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website or call 352- 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

Basic Needs Assistance:

Any student who has difficulty accessing sufficient food or lacks a safe place to live is encouraged to contact the Office of Student Affairs. We care about you, and we can help.

OBSERVANCE OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS:

UF Law respects students' [observance of religious holidays](#). I will be celebrating the Jewish holidays, and you can anticipate that I will cancel (and make up) classes as necessary for that observance.

- 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.

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 Affairs (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>.

COURSE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

This list of assignments 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. I will give you notice at the end of day of how much I expect to cover the following day. I may add assignments to the course during the semester based on the actions of the Supreme Court.

TOPIC	SUBTOPIC	ASSIGNED TEXT in CB unless specified	CASES (In Text)	Const. and other law
Introduction				howtoreadv2.pdf (cmu.edu) Read the Constitution (may find it at p. 1499 of CB)
HISTORY/OVERVIEW	Historical Setting and Organization of the Constitution	1-13		Read the Constitution (may find it at p. 1499 of CB) Read this article: Modes of Constitutional Interpretation (congress.gov)
	Methods of Interpretation	13-23		
	Illustrative Cases: 2 nd Amendment	23-39	<u>D.C. v. Heller</u>	2 nd Amendment
	2 nd Amendment	40-61	NY State Rifle and Pistol Ass'n v. Bruen:	2 nd Amendment
THE FEDERAL COURTS: Judicial Power	Judicial Review	45-69	<u>Marbury v. Madison</u> (1803) <u>Martin v.</u>	Article III generally Article III, §1, §2 Judiciary Act of 1789

			<u>Hunters Lessee</u> (1816)	
			<u>Cooper v. Aaron</u> (1958)	
	Obstacles to Judicial Review: The Political Question Doctrine	70-80	<u>Baker v. Carr</u> <u>Nixon v. U.S.</u>	
	Case & Controversy Requirement	80-85	<u>Muskrat v. U.S.</u>	
	<i>Omit</i> Standing	Omit 85-100		
	Omit Control over Jurisdiction	Omit pp. 100-106		
FEDERALISM: FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE POWER	Express & Implied Powers	111-132		Art. I generally Art. 1, §8, Cl. 18
	Commerce Power: Early View	132-137	<u>Gibbons v. Ogden</u>	Art. 1, §8, Cl. 3
	Commerce Power: Middle Years	138-153	<u>US v. EC Knight & Co</u> <u>Shreveport Rate Case</u> <u>Champion v. Amens</u> <u>Hammer v. Dagenhart</u> <u>Carter v. Carter Coal Co.</u>	
	New Deal & Beyond	154-167	<u>NLRB v. Jones & Laughlin Steel</u> <u>US v. Darby</u> <u>Wickard v. Filburn</u>	

			<u>Heart of Atlanta Motel v. US</u> <u>Katzenbach v. McClung</u>	
	Recent Cases—New Limits? Or Old?	168-204	<u>US v. Lopez</u> <u>US v. Morrison</u> <u>Gonzales v. Raich</u> <u>Ntl Fed of Indep. Busn. V. Sebelius</u>	
	State Immunity from Federal Reg.	242-264, 274-279	<u>Ntl. League of Cities v. Usery</u> <u>Garcia v. SAMTA</u> <u>NY v. US</u> <u>Printz. V. US</u>	
LIMITS ON STATE POWER	Preemption of State by Fed	281-290	<u>Silkwood v. Kerr-McGee</u>	
	Dormant Commerce Clause: Early Cases	290-295	<u>Gibbons v. Ogden</u>	
	DCC: Uniform Ntl. Standard	296-301	<u>Cooley v. Board of Wardens</u> <u>Wabash St. L. & P. Ry. Co. v. Ill</u>	
	DCC: Discrim. Against Interstate Commerce	302-308	<u>Dean Milk & Co. v. Madison</u> <u>Hughes v. Oklahoma</u>	
	DCC: Excessive Burden on IC	308-321	<u>SC St. Hwy. Dept v. Barnwell</u> <u>Bros So. Pac. V. Az.</u> <u>Kassell v. Consol. Freightways</u>	

	DCC: The Latest Supreme Court Decision	Read full case (58 pages) at link https://www.gibsondunn.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/21-468_5if6.pdf	<u>Ntl. Pork Producers Council v. Ross</u>	
	DCC: Meaning of IC	321-330	<u>City of Phila. V. NJ Camps Newfound</u>	
	DCC: Market-Participant Exception	330-336	<u>So-Central Timber Dev v. Wunnicke</u>	
	DCC: Congressional Consent	336-340	<u>Prudential Ins. Co. v. Benjamin</u>	
	Privileges & Immunities	340-349, 358-360	<u>Baldwin v. Fish & Game Piper</u>	Art. IV, §2
	St. Power to Reg House/Sen	Omit CB Reading	<u>Moore v. Harper</u>	Art. I, §4
SEPARATION OF POWERS	Intro	361-362		Art. I, §1 Art. II, §1
PRESIDENTIAL POWERS	Domestic Affairs [Omit Foreign Affairs & Executive Privilege]	363-375	<u>Youngstown Sheet & Tube v. Sawyer</u>	
	Foreign Affairs	375-393	<u>Dames & Moore v. Regan;</u> <u>Curtiss-Wright;</u> <u>Goldwater v. Carter</u>	
OMIT	In Wartime	OMIT		
	Executive Privilege	410-416	<u>US v. Nixon</u>	
	Executive Immunity	416-452	<u>Nixon v. Fitzgerald;</u> <u>Clinton v.</u>	

			<u>Jones;</u> <u>Trump v.</u> <u>Vance;</u> <u>Trump v.</u> <u>Mazars USA</u>	
Hot Topic Discussion	The Trump Prosecutions			Materials to be assigned
INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS	Introduction	553-561	<u>Barron v.</u> <u>Baltimore</u>	
	Privileges or Immunities	561-571	<u>Slaughterho</u> <u>use cases</u>	
	Incorp. Of BOR	571-594	<u>Adamson v.</u> <u>CA</u> <u>McDonald v.</u> <u>City of</u> <u>Chicago</u>	
DUE PROCESS	Substantive/ Econ Liberty	595-612	<u>Lochner</u> <u>West Coast</u> <u>Hotel v.</u> <u>Parrish</u> <u>Williamson</u> <u>v. Lee</u> <u>Optical</u>	14 th Amendment
	Substantive/ Fund. Rights Early Cases	613-620	<u>Pierce v.</u> <u>Soc. Of</u> <u>Sisters</u> <u>Skinner v.</u> <u>Oklahoma</u>	
	Fund Rights Contraceptio n & Abortion	620-651 Omit 652-667	<u>Griswold v</u> <u>Ct.</u> <u>Roe v. Wade</u>	Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Org. https://reason.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/2022-Dobbs-Distribution.pdf
	Fund Rights Marriage & Family	667-680	<u>Loving v. Va.</u> <u>Michael H v.</u> <u>Gerald D</u>	
	Fund Rights Sexuality	681-706, 725-731	<u>Lawrence v.</u> <u>Texas</u> <u>Obergefell v.</u> <u>Hodges</u>	
	Procedural Due Process	733-743	<u>Cleveland</u> <u>Bd. Of Ed. v.</u> <u>Loudermill</u>	

EQUAL PROTECTION	Introduction	745-750		14 th Amendment
	Application to Fed. Govt.	750-753	<u>Bolling v. Sharpe</u>	
	Rational Basis Review	753-765	<u>Railway Exp Agency v. NY NYCTA v. Beazer</u>	
	Racial Discrimination: Facial	767-783	<u>Dred Scott v. Sandford</u> <u>Strauder v. WVa</u> <u>Korematsu v. US</u>	
	Racial Discrimination, Purpose & Effect	783-793	<u>Yick Wo v. Hopkins</u> <u>Washington v. Davis</u>	
	Racial Separate but Equal Laws	793-807	<u>Plessy v. Ferguson</u> ; <u>Brown v. Bd of Ed. of Topeka</u> <u>Loving</u>	
	Affirmative Action	808-822, Omit remainder of casebook section.	<u>City of Richmond v. JA Croson Co</u> <u>Students for Fair Admissions</u>	Read https://reason.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Students-for-Fair-Admission.pdf
	Sex Discrimination	850-865, 872-875	<u>Craig v. Boren</u> <u>US v. Va. Orr v. Orr</u>	
	Alienage	875-879	<u>Graham v. Richardson</u>	
	Sexual Orientation	891-902	<u>Romer v. Evans</u>	
First Amendment	Political Speech		<u>New York Times v. Sullivan</u>	

Addendum: Con Law topics covered on the Multistate Bar Exam

I. The nature of judicial review

- A. Organization and relationship of state and federal courts in a federal system
- B. Jurisdiction

1. Congressional power to define and limit
2. The Eleventh Amendment and state sovereign immunity
- C. Judicial review in operation
 1. The “case or controversy” requirement, including the prohibition on advisory opinions, standing, ripeness, and mootness
 2. The “adequate and independent state ground”
 3. Political questions and justiciability
- II. The separation of powers
 - A. The powers of Congress
 1. Commerce, taxing, and spending powers
 2. War, defense, and foreign affairs powers
 3. Power to enforce the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments
 4. Other powers
 - B. The powers of the president
 1. As chief executive, including the “take care” clause
 2. As commander in chief
 3. Treaty and foreign affairs powers
 4. Appointment and removal of officials
 - C. Federal interbranch relationships
 1. Congressional limits on the executive
 2. The presentment requirement and the president’s power to veto or to withhold action
 3. Nondelegation doctrine
 4. Executive, legislative, and judicial immunities
- III. The relation of nation and states in a federal system
 - A. Intergovernmental immunities
 1. Federal immunity from state law
 2. State immunity from federal law, including the 10th Amendment
 - B. Federalism-based limits on state authority
 1. Negative implications of the commerce clause
 2. Supremacy clause and preemption
 3. Authorization of otherwise invalid state action
- IV. Individual rights
 - A. State action
 - B. Due process
 1. Substantive due process
 - a. Fundamental rights
 - b. Other rights and interests
 2. Procedural due process
 - C. Equal protection
 1. Fundamental rights
 2. Classifications subject to heightened scrutiny
 3. Rational basis review
 - D. Takings
 - E. Other protections, including the privileges and immunities clauses, the contracts clause, unconstitutional conditions, bills of attainder, and ex post facto laws
 - F. First Amendment freedoms
 1. Freedom of religion and separation of church and state
 - a. Free exercise
 - b. Establishment
 2. Freedom of expression

- a. Content-based regulation of protected expression
 - b. Content-neutral regulation of protected expression
 - c. Regulation of unprotected expression
 - d. Regulation of commercial speech
 - e. Regulation of, or impositions upon, public school students, public employment, licenses, or benefits based upon exercise of expressive or associational rights
 - f. Regulation of expressive conduct
 - g. Prior restraint, vagueness, and overbreadth
3. Freedom of the press

4. Freedom of association