

SUPREME COURT CONTROVERSIES
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA LEVIN COLLEGE OF LAW
SPRING 2026-SYLLABUS -LAW6936-23144 -2 CREDITS

Professor Charles W. Collier
Holland Hall Office 373
Office Hours: Thursday 6:30-8:30 p.m. or by appointment. You may also contact me through Canvas

MEETING TIME: Thursday 430pm-630pm

LOCATION: Holland Hall-360

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

An introduction to the fundamental issues and ideas before the U.S. Supreme Court.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Understanding of key issues and cases before the U.S. Supreme Court and ability to evaluate future Supreme Court cases.

REQUIRED READING MATERIALS:

No Required textbook. 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. You are responsible for checking your Canvas page and the e-mail connected to the page on a regular basis for any class announcements or adjustments.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING EVALUATION:

Grades are based primarily on the seminar paper, though the oral arguments may be taken into account in borderline cases.

Each student's final grade will, subject to the College of Law's applicable grading curve, be based on a composite of all "scored"/graded homework assignments, as well as thoughtful and meaningful participation and performance in class. The law school grading policy is available [here](#).

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND MAKEUP POLICY:

Attendance in class is required by both the ABA and the Law School. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. Students are allowed 6 unexcused absences during the course of the semester. Students are responsible for ensuring that they are not recorded as absent if they come in late. 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](#).

UF LEVIN COLLEGE OF LAW STANDARD SYLLABUS POLICIES:

Other information about UF Levin College of Law policies, including compliance with the UF Honor Code, Grading, Accommodations, Class Recordings, and Course Evaluations can be found at this link:

<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/427635/files?preview=98226140>

UF ACADEMIC POLICIES AND RESOURCES:

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

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** outside of class including [reading the assigned materials, writing critical analyses, and developing your final paper.

Seminar Description

Additional materials will be posted to the “Files” section of the course’s *Canvas* page.

In this Seminar the current docket of the U.S. Supreme Court is our topic. Each student selects a current U.S. Supreme Court case to concentrate on. The cases selected are discussed by the whole class, and teams of two students prepare for oral arguments on their selected cases at the end of the term. Requirements also include a seminar paper having something to do with the case selected by the student; this paper will satisfy the Advanced Writing Requirement.

First, I ask students to come to the second and possibly third class with first, second, and maybe even third choices as to which case they would like to be responsible for, which means taking a lead role in its discussion and, at the end of the semester, participating in an oral argument of the case. I try to get “teams” of two students per case, one for each side, in line with students’ preferences to the extent possible. So the first few weeks are devoted to the discussion of the cases, as outlined above. After that the teams meet with me separately in team conferences each week to

discuss their oral arguments and their papers (about 20 pages, due at the end of exams, and having something to do with their case). At some point I hand out the *Guide for Counsel in Cases To Be Argued Before the Supreme Court of the United States* (current edition, from the Supreme Court). Then for the last two weeks of class we reconvene as a group for oral arguments, with the class as the Court. This seems to lend an air of realism to the class.

Class Presentations (Summary)

A. In advance

Select something helpful and informative concerning your case for the class to read in advance (about 20 pages). *Examples* (any of which could be edited or otherwise shortened to 20 pages):

Lower-court opinions in your case (possibly including dissenting opinions)

Cert petition, brief-in-opposition to cert, briefs on the merits, reply briefs, etc.

Scholarly commentary and articles (for example, from the SCOTUS blog)

Op-Ed. pieces on your case or on issues involved in your case

Journalistic reports about your case from newspapers or magazines

B. Presentation (no longer than 30 minutes)

The following sorts of things should normally be covered (these could be divided up between team members; Power Point and other forms of electronic presentation may be used; handouts could also be distributed):

Procedural history of the case: facts, trial, appeals

The precise question(s) on which the Supreme Court has granted review; generally speaking, your case must normally present a “federal question.”

Issue(s) before the Court, especially in light of existing precedent

Any new or newly relevant legal theories pertaining to your case

Questions that could be posed to the class

Questions that the class might pose to you