

POLS 3315: THE AMERICAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM

TR 11:00am-12:15pm

A & S 2-75



Prof. Keith Lee

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Office Hours:
Monday-Thursday
3:30-4:45pm
or by appointment

Course Description:

Prerequisite: POLS 2350 or permission of instructor.

This course is a study of the federal process concentrating on the role of the Supreme Court as the judicial policy making institution in the American political system. This class focuses more on the institutional design of the judicial system rather than the actual judicial process.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand the role of law in the American political system;
- Understand the institutional design of the judicial system;
- Know the primary actors operating within the legal system and their respective roles;
- Be able to analyze and evaluate the criminal justice system;
- Be able to propose reforms to make the judicial system more equitable;
- be able to think critically about current events, specifically to argue articulately and logically when confronted with opposing views.

Required Textbooks:

Carp, R.A. et al. 2016. *Judicial Process in America*. CQ Press: 10th Edition.

Alexander, M. 2012. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The New Press.

Peffley, M. and Hurwitz, J. 2010. *Justice in America: The Separate Realities of Blacks and Whites*. Cambridge University Press.

Course Requirements:

- **Chapter Summaries:** You will draft a summary of each chapter focusing on concepts. I will draft a summary of the first chapter to show you what is expected. You will be responsible for the remaining chapters. Each summary will be worth 20 points. Each summary will be due the Monday following our discussion of the chapter. For example, we will discuss chapter 1 the first week of class. Your summary will be due the following Monday, in most cases, by 5:00 pm. The due date for each chapter summary is listed in parenthesis below.
- **Critical Essays:** You will analyze and evaluate the arguments presented in *The New Jim Crow* and *Justice in America*. Critical essays should be no more than 1500 words each.
- **Critical Essay Response:** You will read and respond to two essays prepared by classmates. Response essays should be no more than 750 words each.
- **Final Exam:** You will have a comprehensive, two-hour final exam that will be administered during the final exam period. The final exam is an assessment of your mastery of the course material, particularly the learning outcomes outlined above. The final exam will be given on the final exam date/time assigned by the college unless other arrangements have been made.

Grade Distribution:

Chapter Summaries	350 points	(35%)
Critical Essays	300 points	(30%)
Response Essays	150 points	(15%)
Final Exam	200 points	(20%)
Total	1000 points	(100%)

Letter Grade Distribution:

>= 900 points	A
800 - 899 points	B
700 - 799 points	C
600 - 699 points	D
<600 points	F

Important Dates:

08/15	1st Day of Classes
08/17	Last Day to Add Classes
08/19	Last Day to Drop Classes
09/05	Labor Day
10/05	Midterm Feedback Due
10/10-11	Fall Break
10/12	Critical Essays Due
10/13	Last Day to Drop and Receive a “W”
11/21	Response Essays Due
11/23-25	Thanksgiving Break
12/05	Last Day of Classes
12/08	Final Exam at 10:30 am!

Course Policies:

- **Office Hours and Contact:** Office hours are stated on the front page of the syllabus. I will be in my office to assist students during the times listed UNLESS an emergency arises in which case I will send out a message using Remind. Students should contact me via email. Students will put their name, their course, and the subject in the subject line (e.g., Keith Lee – POLS 3315 – Question about the Syllabus). Students can sign up for Remind with this link: <http://remind.com/join/f16pol>
- **Late Policy:** No assignments will be accepted after the due date. Every assignment will be posted with ample time to complete them, thus a medical/family emergency on the due date is not an acceptable excuse. Get your work done early and you will not have any issues.
- **Attendance and Absences:** There is not an attendance policy for this course, however it is the absentee’s responsibility to get all missing notes or materials as the exams cover material from lectures and discussion sessions.
- **Classroom Behavior:** Instructors have the responsibility to set and maintain standards of classroom behavior appropriate to the discipline and method of teaching. Students may not engage in any activity which the instructor deems disruptive or counterproductive to the goals of the class, especially speaking while others are speaking. Disruptive behavior will result in the student being asked to leave.
- **Technology:** I allow tablets and computers (no cell phones) in the classroom. However, I reserve the right to revoke this privilege in the event that it becomes a problem. Please sit in the back of the classroom if you are going to be using your laptop so that you do not distract your neighbor behind you when you inevitably stumble on Twitter, Reddit, Tumblr, and any other sites that tempt you.

Georgia College Policies

- **Religious Observance Policy:** Students are permitted to miss class in observance of religious holidays and other activities observed by a religious group of which the student is a member without academic penalty. Exercising of one's rights under this policy is subject to the GC Honor Code. Students who miss class in observance of a religious holiday or event are required to make up the coursework missed as a result from the absence. The nature of the make-up assignments and the deadline for completion of such assignments are at the sole discretion of the instructor. Failure to follow the prescribed procedures voids all student rights under this policy.
- **Assistance for Student Needs Related to Disability:** If you have a disability as described by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, you may be eligible to receive accommodations to assist in programmatic and physical accessibility. Disability Services can assist you in formulating a reasonable accommodation plan and in providing support in developing appropriate accommodations to ensure equal access to all GC programs and facilities. Course requirements will not be waived, but accommodations may assist you in meeting the requirements. For documentation requirements and for additional information, we recommend that you contact Disability Services located in Lanier Hall at 478-445-5931.
- **Student Rating of Instruction Survey:** Near the end of the semester, you will be asked to complete an online survey. Your responses are valued because they give important feedback to instructors to help improve student learning. All responses are completely confidential and your name is not stored with your responses in any way.
- **Academic Honesty:** The integrity of students and their written and oral work is a critical component of the academic process. The submission of another's work as one's own is plagiarism and will be dealt with using the procedures outlined in the GC Catalog. Remember that allowing another student to copy one's own work violates standards of academic integrity.
- **Fire Drills:** Fire drills will be conducted annually. In the event of a fire alarm, students will exit the building in a quick and orderly manner through the nearest hallway exit. Learn the floor plan and exits of the building. Do not use elevators. If you encounter heavy smoke, crawl on the floor so as to gain fresh air. Assist disabled persons and others if possible without endangering your own life. Assemble for a head count on the front lawn of main campus or other designated assembly area.
- **Electronic Recording Policy:** Electronic video and/or audio recording is not permitted during any class unless the student obtains permission from the instructor and every student present. If permission is granted, any distribution of the recording is prohibited. Violation of this policy is grounds for removal from the class and referral for disciplinary action. Students granted specific electronic recording accommodations from Disability Services do not require special permission; however, the instructor must be notified. Any distribution is prohibited.

Course Outline:

The following outline is tentative. The weekly coverage might change as it depends on the progress of the class. However, you must keep up with the reading assignments. The book chapter listed in the “Chapter” column should be read **PRIOR** to the beginning of the first class the following week. For example, you should have Chapter 1 read before we begin classroom instruction on Chapter 2. We will spend some time before each class answering any questions related to the reading. Also, you will be required to keep up with supplemental readings which will be assigned later, but in plenty of time for you to incorporate them into your chapter summary should you decide to do so. Supplemental readings will be posted to GeogriaView and to my website.

Week	Dates	Chapter(s)	Topic
01	08/15-08/19	1 (08/22)	Foundation of Law in the United States
02	08/22-08/26	2 (08/29)	The Federal Judicial System
03	08/29-09/02	6 (09/05)	Federal Judges
04	09/05-09/09	3 (09/12)	State Judicial Systems
05	09/12-09/16	5 (09/19)	State Judges
06	09/19-09/23	4 (09/26)	Jurisdiction and Policy Making Boundaries
07	09/26-09/30	7 (10/03)	Policy Links: The Citizenry, President, and Judiciary
08	10/03-10/07	14 & 15 (10/17)	Policy Making
Critical Essays Due on 10/12 by 5:00 pm			
09	10/10-10/14		<i>The New Jim Crow & Justice in America</i>
10	10/17-10/21	8 (10/24)	Actors: Lawyers, Litigants, and Interest Groups
11	10/24-10/27	9 (10/31)	Crime and Procedures
12	10/31-11/04	10 (11/07)	Criminal Trial
13	11/07-11/11	11 (11/14)	Civil Trial
14	11/14-11/18	12 & 13 (11/28)	Decision Making
Response Essays Due on 11/21 by 5:00 pm			
15	11/21-11/24		Response Critiques
16	11/28-12/01		Movie: My Cousin Vinny
17	12/08		Final Exam at 10:30 am!