

POLS 4325: SPECIAL TOPICS IN LAW AND POLITICS – LAW AND JUSTICE

POLS 4325 – CRN 33228
Cotton Memorial 201
Mon. - Fri., 9:00am - 5:00pm

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This special topics course focuses on law and justice. Through the reading of intricate texts, students enhance their critical reading and analytical reasoning skills. In addition to developing these skills, effective legal reasoning requires mastery of deductive and inductive logic, as well as the understanding and dissecting of complex arguments. These other foundational skills are sharpened through an increased understanding of logic principles and techniques.

UTEP EDGE

This course will help you develop the following UTEP Edge skills: (1) *critical thinking* through the analysis of difficult readings and complex arguments; (2) *communication* through class discussions and group work; (3) *problem-solving* enhanced by answering hundreds of challenging LSAT questions; and (4) *confidence* to succeed on the LSAT through diligent, purposeful, and dedicated practice.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course has two primary objectives: (1) to enhance the foundational skills of effective legal reasoning, and (2) to prepare you to take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT).

At the end of this course you will be able to:

- *Analyze* difficult readings;
- *Understand* and *Dissect* conditional statements;
- *Assess* the validity of arguments;
- *Construct*, *Deconstruct*, and *Reconstruct* complex arguments; and
- *Master* the LSAT.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

A laptop or tablet and a fast and reliable internet connection are necessary to access: 1) the course site on Blackboard, 2) the LSAC's *LawHub Advantage* at <https://app.lawhub.org>, and 3) the LSPI's LSAT web application tool at <http://www.utepspi.us>. More information will be provided on how to login, navigate, and use these websites.

CLASSROOM RESPONSE SYSTEM

We will use a cloud-based student response software by iClicker to administer polls and quizzes. There is no extra cost for using this software application. You are required to participate in the

iClicker Cloud polls and quizzes. You can participate with a smartphone, tablet, or laptop. It is your responsibility to set up your iClicker Student account in a timely fashion and to make sure your device is working properly. You will need to create an iClicker Student account if you do not already have one. You will also need to connect to the internet or to your mobile data plan while using iClicker Student.

ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING

Your grade will be based on the following assignments:

Assessment	Percent of Grade	Total Points
Class Participation	25%	100
Quizzes & Homework	25%	100
LSAT Drilling	25%	100
Practice LSAT Exams	25%	100
Total	100%	400

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class participation is comprised of Attendance, Class Contribution, and the Law School Panels.

Attendance (10% - 40 pts)

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken each class. Missing class will adversely affect your final grade. Missing more than 2 classes may result in a lower final grade or dismissal from the course. Persistent tardiness and leaving class early are not acceptable. Two tardies and/or early exists will count as 1 absence; 4 tardies and/or early exists equals 2 absences, etc. Students are expected to be on time. Students receive 2 points for each class session they attend.

Class Contribution (10% - 40 pts)

Students are expected to be prepared for, and to participate during, each class. Contributions to the class discussion are expected and should be germane to the topic at hand. Students should strive to provide meaningful and insightful contributions to the class discussion. Students are expected to participate in polls conducted during class sessions.

Law School Panels (5% - 20 pts)

On Wednesday afternoons (1pm - 2:30pm), there will be panels comprised of admission personnel and representatives from various law schools. The four law school panels are mandatory and attendance is required. There is no law school panel on the last Wednesday (Aug. 7th).

QUIZZES (40 PTS) & HOMEWORK (60 PTS)

Six quizzes will be administered during the course. The first four quizzes are worth 6 points each and the last two quizzes are worth 8 points each. All quizzes will take place during class and will be administered through the iClicker classroom response system. Missed quizzes cannot be taken at a later date.

Eight homework assignments will be administered during the course. The first six homework assignments are worth 6 points each and the last two homework assignments are worth 12 points each. All homework assignments will be available on Blackboard and must be completed on, and submitted through, Blackboard. Each assignment must be completed before the beginning of class the following day. Homework assignments submitted late will receive a zero, but will be reviewed for accuracy. Homework always includes diligent, purposeful, and dedicated LSAT practice.

LSAT DRILLING (100 PTS)

You are required to drill LSAT questions. Students who do not practice during drilling sessions will have their final grade lowered.

PRACTICE LSAT EXAMS (100 PTS)

You will take, and are required to review, multiple practice LSAT exams. Practice LSAT exams will primarily be administered on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. All practice LSAT exams are mandatory. Students who do not take, and who do not review, practice LSAT exams will have their final grade lowered. Similarly, students who do not input their answers into the LSPI web application tool will have their final grade lowered. Please note that the practice LSAT exams also include the practice *LSAT Argumentative Writing* assessments you will take during the course.

QUALITY OF WORK

You are expected to produce quality work. Quality work requires being prepared and encompasses both substance and presentation (style, organization, grammar, etc.). Poor presentation distracts from what it is you are trying to communicate. Regarding LSAT drilling and the practice LSAT exams, quality work requires your *best* effort. Producing quality work requires more than a minimum effort. In all cases, quality trumps quantity.

COURSE COMMUNICATION

Important course information will primarily be communicated in class and through email. Note: your “miners.utep.edu” email address is the only email address I will use when communicating important information via email. Students who are absent from class are responsible for obtaining any important information they may have missed. Students are responsible for regularly checking their official UTEP email. It is not a valid excuse to say, “I did not receive the email.”

COURSE POLICIES

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

I will strive to provide a classroom environment appropriate for academic instruction and discussion. For this to occur, make sure you complete the assignments, as scheduled; silence cell phones; and arrive on time. We will welcome and encourage different ideas and viewpoints. Some topics are controversial and students should feel comfortable expressing their thoughts. We will respect what others have to say – we do not have to agree with them – and avoid personal insult, interrupting, and rudeness. We will avoid becoming politically charged when discussing sensitive topics. We will be civil.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Students requesting accommodations based on a disability must register with the [UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#) (CASS). Contact CASS at 915-747-5148 or email them at cass@utep.edu. Students can also apply for accommodations online via the [CASS AIM portal](#).

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

To be withdrawn from the class, students must take appropriate actions on or before UTEP's deadlines. Automatic withdrawals will not be made by the instructor. A student may officially withdraw from this class with an automatic 'W' at any time before **July 29, 2024**. According to UTEP policy, no withdrawals will be allowed after this date. You will receive a failing grade if you simply stop attending class and do not take appropriate actions to withdraw from the course.

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you are encouraged to report your results to covidaction@utep.edu, so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors. The Student Health Center is equipped to provide COVID-19 testing.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission wear face masks when indoors in groups of people. The best way that Miners can take care of Miners is to get the vaccine. If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area, and will be available at no charge on campus during the first week of classes. For more information about the current rates, testing, and vaccinations, please visit epstrong.org.

COVID-19 ACCOMMODATIONS

Students are not permitted on campus when they have a positive COVID-19 test, exposure or symptoms. If you are not permitted on campus, you should contact me as soon as possible so we can arrange necessary and appropriate accommodations. We can further discuss what accommodations are needed should you miss assessment deadlines because you are sick with COVID-19. Your health takes priority.

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY

Scholastic Dishonesty will not be tolerated.

I am required by the Handbook of Operating Procedures for The University of Texas at El Paso to report "all alleged acts of scholastic dishonesty...to the Dean of Students for disposition." (See Section III of the Handbook of Operating Procedures for UTEP (*Academic Policies and Faculty Personnel Matters* 4.14a.))

As stated in Section II of the Handbook of Operating Procedures for UTEP (*Student Conduct and Discipline* 1.2.3a): "Any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person without giving sufficient credit, taking an examination for another person, or any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts."

Please refer to UTEP's Office of Community Standards' *Tips for Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty* at <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/standards/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html>. You should read the *Avoiding Plagiarism* handout available on their site, which is also available on Blackboard.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule below outlines what will be covered during this course. It will be followed to the extent possible in meeting the instructional goals and needs of the course. You are required to complete the assigned homework, quizzes, and practice LSAT exams each week. I reserve the right to alter this schedule as needed.

Date	Readings and Assignments
Week 1 7/10 - 7/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ HW #1 & #2➤ <i>Panel with Law School Reps.</i>➤ <i>Presentation - Financing Law School</i>➤ Practice LSAT Exams #134 & #138
Week 2 7/15 - 7/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Quizzes #1 & #2➤ HW #3 & #4➤ <i>Panel with Law School Reps.</i>➤ LSAT Argumentative Writing #1➤ Practice LSAT Exams #135 & #139
Week 3 7/22 - 7/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Quizzes #3 & #4➤ HW #5 & #6➤ <i>Panel with Law School Reps.</i>➤ <i>Presentation - Resumes & Transcripts</i>➤ No Class on Friday (7/26)➤ LSAT Argumentative Writing #2➤ Practice LSAT Exams #136 & #143
Week 4 7/29 - 8/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Quiz #5➤ HW #7 & #8➤ <i>Panel with Law School Reps.</i>➤ No Class on Friday (8/2)➤ LSAT Argumentative Writing #3➤ Practice LSAT Exams #137 & #144
Week 5 8/5 - 8/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Quiz #6➤ LSPI Evaluations➤ Last Day of Class on Wednesday (8/7)➤ LSAT Argumentative Writing #4➤ Practice LSAT Exams #140 & #145