

COURSE OUTLINE
PLS 101
Introduction to Legal Studies
Spring 2018
Attorney Neysha Sanders, Instructor

Office Location: Social Science Building Office "B"
Mississippi Valley State University
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Office Hours: Monday 12:30-1:00 p.m. Wednesday 12:30-1:00 p.m. Thursday 1:00-5:30 p.m.
or by appointment.

Required Text:

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, (New York: New Press, Second Edition, 2011)
Jay M. Feinman, *Law 101*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Fourth Edition, 2014)

Suggested Texts:

Black's Law Dictionary

Jay M. Feinman, *1001 Legal Words You Need to Know*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course offers a basic introduction to law focusing on law in the United States. The course will survey constitutional law, criminal law, and civil law. Where appropriate, the course will balance its focus on the operation of the contemporary American legal system with background in legal history, philosophy of law and comparative legal systems.

EXTENDED COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will address the question: What is law? We will explore the ways in which the United States power, authority and institutions are framed and enacted through law.

The course requires students to think. Instead of the instructor lecturing and students repeating the content of the lectures, students will think about law and arrive at their own conclusions. This is not just a matter of giving opinions. There is a world of difference between having an opinion and having an informed opinion. Having an informed opinion requires students to explore all sides of an issue and state what reasoning and evidence supports positions. (Please note that sensible people will frequently decide that there are insufficient grounds to take a position one way or another.) Making a good grade will depend upon developing and expressing informed opinions about the nature and operation of the law.

COURSE GOALS:

The main goal of the course is to introduce students to basic concepts, ideas approaches and information useful for understanding law. Students should leave the course knowing more about what scholars studying law do. Students should also be better able to discuss legal issues intelligently. The course seeks to improve student's willingness and capacity to serve as effective and respectful citizens in and out of the classroom.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Students will speak proficiently about the law.
2. Students will write proficiently about the law.
3. Students will understand the operations of legal systems.
4. Students will critically evaluate claims-based argument and evidence.

GRADES:

Attendance: Attendance will count for 10% of your grade. You may lose points if you are late for class without an excuse. You will not be penalized for excused absences.

Exit Logs: After each session involving lecture/discussion, students will take 5-10 minutes at the end of the period to write a summary of the main things they learned in the class that period. They will also indicate what material was confusing and in need of clarification. Exit logs will be returned to the students the following week. Exit logs will count as 10% of the final grade.

Notes: Each student will make, date, and keep detailed notes for every class attended other than test days. The notes may be handwritten or stored on a portable device & stored. The notes will be submitted to the instructor at the final. Notes count as 10% of the grade.

Group Presentation on Legal Issues: Students will divide into groups of three and select a topic related to contemporary legal issues. Using reliable legal sources, the students will present their findings. The presentations will follow the IRAC method and be graded with an IRAC rubric. A list of acceptable topics will be distributed by the instructor. Students may suggest their own topics for approval. The oral presentation will count as 20% of the final grade.

Book Review: Every student will write a critical analysis of the Michelle Alexander's book, *The New Jim Crow*. The reports will follow guideline that will be provided for writing the review. The best review will be selected for presentation at the Valley research day in the spring. The book review must be submitted through Turnitin, for which the instructor will provide registration information. The book review will count as 20% of the final grade.

Tests: There will be two tests. There will be an in-class midterm consisting of two parts: a) an ID test and an essay test. The essay portion is open book and open notes. b) An in-class final following the same format as the midterm. Each test is worth 25 % of the final grade.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY:

Academic Integrity includes a commitment to the values of honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, respect and responsibility. Academic Integrity is violated by any dishonest act that is committed in an academic context. Honesty and Integrity are essential values of the Mississippi Valley State University's mission to pursue truth and knowledge. Therefore, Mississippi Valley State University will not tolerate academic dishonesty in any form and will impose sanctions if clearly demonstrated. Academic dishonesty erodes the quality and value of degree conferred.

Although the faculty is responsible for establishing standards for moral and academic excellence in teaching and learning, these standards can be reached only with the cooperation and support of students. Students are expected, therefore, to accept responsibility for maintaining honesty and integrity in all acts inside and outside the classroom, studio, or laboratory.

For detailed description of sanctions and appeal procedures consult Student Handbook and/ or Undergraduate Catalog.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students are allowed one excused absence before the instructor begins to deduct from the attendance percentage. Students who are late for class without an excuse will be counted absent. All work must be submitted on time (unless you have an official excuse) or points will be deducted from your work. University policy dictates that students who miss 25% of their classes with unexcused absences will fail the class.

Make-up exams will be given only when a bona fide excuse is obtained from the office of the dean of students, and the exam is completed within two weeks of return to campus. Written work will only be accepted for grading, within a week of return, if there is an authorized excused absence.

Grading Scale:

A=90 or higher.

B=80 or higher.

C=70 or higher.

D=60 or higher.

F=59 or less.

PLAGIARISM POLICY: Do not claim the work of another author as your own! If you do, you will fail this course. Students should consult the instructor and/or the University catalog if there are doubts about whether work involves plagiarism.

CELL PHONES:

Silence all cell phones! If you answer a cell phone in class, you will be counted absent that day. You may not sit in class and play games on your phone or text message either. If there is an emergency that requires you to leave your phone on, notify the instructor before class begins.

You may use a smart phone to look up information on appropriate occasion or to take class notes.

MIDTERM PROGRESS REPORTS:

Each student should arrange to meet with the instructor the week before midterm exams to discuss progress toward successfully completing the course.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Mississippi Valley State University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students with a documented disability. If you feel you are eligible to receive accommodations for a covered disability (medical, physical, psychiatric, learning, vision, hearing, etc.) and would like to request it for this course, you must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) program administered by University College. It is recommended that you visit the Disabilities Office located inside the EMAP Computer Lab in the Technical Education (IT) Building to register for the program at the beginning of each semester. If you are determined to be eligible after your confidential consultation, you will be provided with a Memo of Accommodations that must be submitted to each of your instructors.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please contact Mr. Billy Benson, Jr. via phone or email at 662-254-3005 or billy.benson@mvsu.edu.

DISCLAIMER: This document does not constitute a contract with the University. It contains guidelines.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE:

August 20, 2018: Introduction.

August 22, 2018: **What is law? Historical and Philosophical Origins of the Law (Reading Feinman, Preface and Chapter 1).**

August 27, 2018: **Constitutional Law: a) The Role of the US Supreme Court b) The Powers of Government; c) Federalism/Separation of Powers Law (Reading: Feinman, Chapter 2; The Constitution of the United States- Available online at many sites).**

August 29, 2018: **Constitutional Law: Civil Liberties (Reading: Feinman, Chapter 3; The Amendments to the Constitution of the United States- Available online at many sites) Sign up for CREDO: Instructions provided.**

September 3, 2018: **LABOR DAY (NO CLASS).**

September 5, 2018: **Constitutional Law: Civil Liberties (Continued).**

September 10, 2018: **The Litigation Process (Reading: Feinman, Chapter 4). The Litigation Process (Continued).**

September 12, 2018: **Using IRAC to analyze the law; online resources for studying law. (Computer lab)**

September 17, 2018: **Criminal Procedure (Reading: Feinman, Chapter 9).**

September 19, 2018: **Criminal Procedure (Reading: Feinman, Chapter 9).**

September 24, 2018: **Torts (Reading: Feinman, Chapter 5). Complete CREDO module on "Inquiry".**

September 26, 2018: **Torts (continued). Property Law (Reading: Feinman, Chapter 7)**

October 1, 2018: **Mid-term review (prepping for essay exam)**

October 3, 2018: **MID-TERM EXAM. Will cover basic concepts of law, constitutional law, the litigation process, torts, and property law. Open books and notes.**

October 8, 2018: **Property Law (Reading: Feinman, Chapter 7) (Continued). How to write a book Review.**

October 10, 2018: **Race, Drugs & Mass Incarceration (Reading: Alexander, Chapter 2)**

October 15, 2018: **Groups meet to develop topics (Computer lab)**

October 17, 2018: **Race, Drugs & Mass Incarceration (Reading: Alexander, Chapter 2)**

October 22, 2018: **Race, Drugs & Mass Incarceration (Reading: Alexander, Chapter 3)**

October 24, 2018: **Race, Drugs & Mass Incarceration (Reading: Alexander, Chapter 4)**

October 29, 2018: **Race, Drugs & Mass Incarceration (Reading: Alexander, Chapter 5)**

October 31, 2018: **Race, Drugs & Mass Incarceration (Reading: Alexander, Chapter 5) (Continued).**

November 5, 2018: **Race, Drugs & Mass Incarceration (Reading: Alexander, Chapter 6)**

November 7, 2018: **Race, Drugs & Mass Incarceration (Reading: Alexander, Chapter 6) (Continued).**

November 12, 2018: **Oral Presentations.**

November 14, 2018: **Work on group projects.**

November 19-20, 2018: **FALL BREAK!**

November 21-23, 2018: **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAYS.**

November 26, 2018: **Oral Presentations. Draft of Book Review due.**

November 28, 2018: **Oral Presentations. Draft of Book Review returned.**

December 3, 2018: **Review for Final.**

December 5, 2018: **FINAL EXAM. Book report due; Notes due.**