

AMERICAN LEGAL HISTORY

Rutgers, Newark: Spring 2015

History 21:512:265

Time: Tues. 6-9 p.m.

Location: 455 Conklin

Instructor: Stuart Gold

Office Hours: Tues. 5-6 p.m. (Conklin 326)

Contact Information: stuart.gold@rutgers.edu

Course Description:

This is a survey course of selected topics in American legal history from the late nineteenth century to today, with stops in the Progressive Era, the Depression and the Civil Rights Era. For the most part we will focus on constitutional law and how the Supreme Court had dealt with issues of that all too familiar troika of race, class and gender. As with any survey course, we cannot cover every issue, nor can we cover even the selected issues in depth. However, I hope that by the end of the semester you will have a good working knowledge of these topics so that you can go on to more in depth investigation in other courses.

There are two basic approaches to the teaching of legal history. The first is the study of how the legal system and particular laws developed. This approach is familiar to those in the legal profession - lawyers, judges and law professors. The second approach focuses on how law functions in and affects society. I plan to incorporate both approaches in the course. You will need some background in the mechanics of the law – both procedural and substantive – in order to appreciate how the law functions in society. However, as students of history, rather than as students of law, we have a strong interest in understanding how the law affected society as a whole, not merely how the law functioned for those directly involved in the legal system – i.e. the legislators, the judges, the lawyers and last, but all too often least, the individuals whose cases become the grist for the legal mills.

In terms of teaching method, the classes include lectures on the assigned reading materials for the day and class discussions about the readings. The assigned readings for any week will combine readings from our text, *A March on Liberty*, Vol. II, supplemented by original sources, such as statutes and cases. It is important that everyone attend the first class as I will teach you how to find cases and articles on the West legal database that are available to all Rutgers undergraduates.

Finally, please note that for those of you considering a career in the law, this course is not offered as a pre-law course because there is no particular course of study that will help you get into law school. Law school admission committees are primarily interested in the quality of your intellect as demonstrated by your grades and LSAT scores, rather than in the particular course of study you followed as an undergraduate. (It is better to be a good student of art history or accounting than a middling student of jurisprudence.) Nor is this course designed to prepare you for the law school experience. The primary goal of law school education is to teach law students to “think like lawyers” through the use the Socratic Method. Thus law school teaching focuses on the analytical tools aspiring lawyers need to understand how judges make law through case

law. (Even in statutory courses, the materials focus on cases as much as on the underlying statute.) What law students learn of the substance of law or, worse yet, the actual practice of law, is at best a byproduct of the law school experience.

We will take a very different approach as we will be more concerned with the “why” of law as much as the “how” of law. While you will gain some familiarity with the subject matter of the standard first year law school class on constitutional law, with a smattering of civil procedure, and learn law by reading cases, you will not be subjected to the unnecessary rigors of the Socratic Method - in part because I am not Socrates and in part because mastering the art of legal analysis would take distract us from what I see as the goals of the course.

Course Objectives:

1. To become acquainted with the basic themes and developments in American Legal History;
2. To develop critical thinking skills about the interplay of law, politics, and social history;
3. To learn how to read historical legal documents;
4. To provide a historical perspective that facilitates better understanding and analysis of contemporary legal issues by grounding them in the debates of the past.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance. Attendance is mandatory. You must show up for class, *on time*, having read the day’s assigned material and prepared to discuss it. I will take attendance by having the students sign an attendance sheet. Signing in and then leaving before the end of the class does not count as attendance unless I excuse you. Excusable grounds for leaving before the end of class may include illness or child-care issues. Please note that having a classmate sign in for you is a form of cheating and may lead to both the absent student and the forger receiving Fs. **Any student who misses four or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F.**
2. Quizzes/Homework. There will be four or five quizzes over the course of the semester. Each quiz will cover the material for the prior two weeks. There is a twofold purpose for the quizzes: (i) to make sure that you are doing the assigned readings and (ii) to prepare you for the mid-term and final as the short answer portion of both of those tests will be based, in part, on the quizzes. There will also be homework in the form of short writing assignments or questions directed to that week’s assigned readings. The quizzes and homework will collectively count for 10% of your final grade. I will drop your lowest grade your remaining grades in calculating your grade for this part of the course.

3. Drop and withdrawal deadlines:

The last date for students to drop a course with no penalty: 1/27/15

The last date to withdraw from a course with a "W" grade: 3/30/15

4. Case Analysis Assignment. Due February 24, 2014. I will give you a particular case to find. Your assignment will be to find the case, find another source that referred to the case, either another case or a law journal article, and then write a summary of the case (what we used to call in my law school days, briefing the case) and a summary of the later document. The written project summary should be 500-750 words.

5. Midterm exam. March 10, 2014. Closed book.

6. Book Report. Due April 7, 2014. Although most of the weekly readings will be relatively short, I want you to read one complete book as part of the course. You will read the book and write an analytical essay in which you will identify the primary argument made by the author, review the historical evidence that the author uses in support of that argument and provide a critical reaction to the book. Feel free to disagree with the author, but be prepared to back up your argument. The book report should be 1,000 to 1,500 words. I will post to Blackboard a guide for writing a book report.

You may choose one of the following books. If there is another book on legal history that you might want to read, I am open to suggestions. Please keep in mind that the book must involve some aspect of legal history covering the period 1898 to 2014.

David E. Bernstein, Rehabilitating Lochner, University of Chicago Press, 2011. A recent reevaluation of the Lochner decision in which Bernstein persuasively argues that Lochner did not undermine Progressive reform but rather served as a useful check on excessive governmental regulation. It is a good choice for those who want either a short book or one written from a conservative perspective.

Margot Canady, The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America (Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America), 2009. An innovative and award-winning study of oppression of homosexuality in the federal bureaucracies regulating the military, immigration and welfare.

Noah Feldman, Scorpions: The Battles and Triumphs of FDR's Great Supreme Court Justices, Belknap Press, Cambridge, 2011. A lively and thoughtful history of the Supreme Court as shaped by Franklin Roosevelt's selection of four justices during the thirteen years of his presidency.

Michael Klarman, Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Movement, 2007. Get the abridged edition, rather than the much longer 2005 edition. This is a groundbreaking study of the seminal civil rights case of the 20th century. Klarman argues that it was the white southern violent backlash to the Supreme Court's decision, rather than the decision itself, that led to white northern support for the legal advances in civil rights attained in the 1960s.

Peggy Pascoe, What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America, Oxford University Press, 2010. A thorough and very readable study of laws prohibiting mixed race marriages and how those laws were declared unconstitutional in the Supreme Court's decision in Loving v. Virginia.

7. Final exam. Tuesday, May 12, 2015, 6:20-9:20 p.m. – not cumulative. Closed Book.

8. Participation. I appreciate that some of you may be shy about speaking up in class, but do not be too concerned on this score. Participation includes attendance, attention, preparation as well as speaking up in class. Cutting class, arriving late or leaving early, and internet use (texting, emailing or general net-surfing) will lower your participation grade because you cannot be participating if you are doing those things.

A note on written assignments. The case assignment and the book report should be sent to my Rutgers email address, stuart.gold@rutgers.edu. All written assignments should be emailed to me in Word format, no pdfs, tifs or hard copies.

A note on exams. Both the mid-term and final examinations will be closed book. Each exam will consist of the short answer questions (75%) and an essay (25%). The questions for the short answer portion of the exams will be derived in part from the quizzes - so pay attention to the quizzes, the assigned readings and the materials covered in class. You are responsible for reading and knowing the assigned materials even if we do not cover the material in class. In order to perform well on the quizzes and exams you will have to read all the assigned materials, make notes of the important parts of the readings, come to class and take notes of my lectures.

Grading

Midterm: 25%

Final: 25%

Book Report: 20%

Case Assignment – 10%,

Quizzes/Homework – 10%

Participation: 10%

Required Text: Melvin L. Urofsky and Paul Finkelman, A March of Liberty, Vol II, 3rd ed. (“MOL”) Oxford University Press:2011, ISBN 978-0-19-538274-7. The book will be available at the University book store. **Do not try to save money by purchasing a used copy of the second edition as you will get lost with the readings.**

Any other assigned readings will be posted as pdf files on Blackboard. I will also post on Blackboard, Gold, Stuart, Law for Historians. This is my introduction to the law for the uninitiated. I offer it as a reference, not as required reading.

Policy on Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism)

All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge. To receive credit, every assignment must have your signature under the following phrase: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination / assignment.”

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any use of the ideas or words of another person without proper acknowledgment of credit will result in penalties up to and possibly including a course grade of F. Cheating on exams will result in an automatic F.

Note that the uncited usage of uncopyrighted material such as Wikipedia entries still constitutes plagiarism.

Policy on Disabilities

This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Students with disabilities, including learning disabilities, requiring assistance and/or accommodation should speak with Disability Services in a timely manner.

Policy on Classroom Courtesy

- Keep cell phones in silent mode. No texting or emailing either.
- As to food and drink, I realize that this is a night class and you may want a snack to keep you going until we finish. Nothing noisy, aromatic or otherwise distracting.
- I look forward to lively but still decorous discussions. No shouting, angry outbursts, interrupting or talking over one another. As I learned in third grade at PS 20 from Mrs. Hall, we can all sing together, but we cannot all speak together. Most importantly respect the opinions of your classmates. Having strong beliefs is good. Playing devil’s advocate for an unpopular position is good. (Please keep in mind that irony is your instructor’s favorite mode of discourse, so take what I say in class with a grain of salt.) Heaping invective on those who disagree with you is bad and will have negative consequences.
- As long as you are making a sincere inquiry, there is no such thing as a foolish question. Many of the concepts we cover will be new to you. As I have been practicing law for over thirty years I may, wrongfully, assume that you are more familiar with legal terms and theories than I have a right to do. If there is something you do not understand, just ask. Do not assume that you are the only one in the dark. There will probably be a dozen classmates similarly puzzled but who are afraid to ask. You will be benefitting all of us by raising your questions. So, ask away, although I may defer answering your query until a more appropriate point in the class.

Policy on Office Hours

My office hours are for you. Stop by with any questions you have about assignments, readings, classroom discussions, other pertinent topics, or just drop by to chat. If your schedule conflicts with my office hours, we can set up an appointment at a mutually agreeable time as I will be on campus from time to time. We can meet at my law office in Roseland, which is only a 10-15 minute drive from campus.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

***A note on assigned readings. Items with an asterisk will be available on Blackboard.**

1. January 20, 2015 – Introduction

An overview of the course.

How to find cases and articles that are assigned in class through Campus Westlaw. How to read a legal opinion.

Readings:

MOL – Chapter 24 – America becomes a colonial power.

(Please note that you do not have to read the authors' suggested reading at the end of each chapter.)

*Orrin S. Kerr, "How to Read a Legal Opinion: A Guide for New Law Students", 11 Green Bag 2d 1, pp. 51-63 (2007).

* Integrated Solutions, Inc. v. Service Support Specialties, Inc., 124 F.3d 487, (3rd Cir. 1997). Just skim the case in order to get an idea of the format of a reported case. You do not have to read the case for content.

2. January 27, 2013 – The Progressive Era and Government Regulation

MOL, Chap. 25

*Lochner v. New York

3. February 3, 2014 - The End of the Progressive Era, The Great War

MOL, Chap. 26 pp. 656-667; Chap. 27

Quiz

*Selections from The Sherman Anti-Trust Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1 – 7 and the Clayton Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 12 – 27.

4. February 10, 2014. The Depression and the New Deal – Priming the Pump over the Objection of the Supreme Court

MOL Ch. 30 pp. 737-748, Ch. 31 pp. 763-778, Ch. 32 pp. 794-803.

Discuss case assignment.

5. February 17, 2014. WWII and the beginning of the Cold War – Reds under the Bed.

MOL Ch. 33 pp. 815-825, Ch. 34

Quiz

6. February 24, 2014. The contemporary Civil Rights Era begins - Brown

MOL Ch. 35

View Excerpt from Eyes on the Prize

*Brown v. Board of Education

Case assignment due

7. March 3, 2014 – Civil Rights continued – The gains of the 1960s. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

MOL Ch. 36

Review for mid-term

Quiz

8. **March 10, 2014 – MID-TERM – Closed Book**

9. March 17, 2014 – No class, Spring recess.

10. March 24, 2014 – The Warren Court – Moderate Republican turns judicial activist. The Supreme Court finds rights in the Constitution that no one knew existed.

MOL Ch. 37, Ch. 39 pp. 962-970

Review Mid-Term

11. March 31, 2014 – The Burger Court – Cutting back on judicial activism.

MOL Ch. 40 pp. 977-999, Ch. 41 pp. 1004-108

12. April 7, 2014 – The Rehnquist Court – The Right strikes back.

MOL Ch. 43. Ch. 44

Book report due

Quiz

13. April 14, 2014 – Civil Rights in the Age of Obama – The Roberts Court Revisits Affirmative Action and the Voting Rights Act of 1965

*Fisher v. Texas – Affirmative Action

*Shelby County v. Holder – Voting Rights Act

14. April 21, 2014 – The Second Amendment – Gun Ownership: From Collective Right to Right to Individual Right

*Heller v. District of Columbia

*MacDonald v. City of Chicago

Quiz

15. April 28, 2014 – Political Free Speech – The best politics that money can buy.

*Citizens United

Review for Final

16. May 12, 2015, 6:20-9:20 p.m. Final exam. – not cumulative. Closed Book.