

The Graduate School
of Political Management
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Legislative Affairs

Spring Semester
January 17 – May 4

Judicial Politics

Course Number: LGAF 6218.LH
3 Credit Hours

Thursdays/6-8 PM
Hall of States

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor



Don Cravins, Jr. serves as the National Urban League’s Senior Vice President for Policy and Executive Director of the Washington Bureau. Cravins leads the development of the National Urban League’s policy, research, and advocacy agenda, while expanding the organization’s impact and influence inside the Capital Beltway.

Since 1998, Cravins has been a licensed attorney and a member of the Louisiana Bar Association. In 2004, he was elected to the Louisiana House of Representatives. In 2006, Cravins was elected to the Louisiana Senate. During his tenure in the Louisiana Senate, Cravins was heavily involved in post-Hurricane Katrina issues as the Chairman of the Senate Insurance Committee and was an active member of the Juvenile Justice Commission of Louisiana.

In January of 2009, Cravins left the Louisiana Legislature to serve as Staff Director and Chief Counsel for the United States Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship. In January of 2013, Cravins began serving as Chief of Staff for U.S. Senator Mary L. Landrieu of Louisiana. In addition to his duties at the National Urban League, Cravins serves as a captain in the District of Columbia Army National Guard Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps with the 352nd Legal Operations Detachment.

He is married to Attorney Yvette Puckett Cravins and they have three children, Dominique Claire, Trey and Chloe Denise. Yvette serves as Chief of Staff for Congressman William Lacy Clay, Jr. of Missouri.

Contact Information

Phone Number: (202) 629-5755
Email Address: dcravins@gwu.edu

Communication

Best way to reach me is by email or by phone. Students can expect a response within 24 hours. For questions about assignments due for Thursday’s class, please send me an email before 1 p.m. on Tuesday. Students may also request an in-person meeting after class.

Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site throughout the semester, as Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications between the instructors and the students. Students can access the course site at <https://blackboard.gwu.edu>. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or helpdesk.gwu.edu.

Academic Integrity

All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Deliberate failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at <http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>.

Support for Students with Disabilities

GW’s Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. Accommodations are available through DSS to facilitate academic access for students with disabilities. Please notify your instructor if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at <http://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>.

In the Event of an Emergency or Crisis during Class

If we experience some an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave here, we will meet at outside of the building on North Capitol Street in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University’s operating status: <http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/>.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is required beginning with the first class meeting, and students are expected to attend all class sessions. It is the responsibility of the student to arrange to make up all course work missed because of legitimate class absences and to notify the instructor when an absence will occur. The instructor determines the effect of absences on grades. You are expected to come to class having read the course materials and prepared to discuss and debate issues raised by them. I reserve the right to call on students even when they do not volunteer. Students who do not attend class regularly will see their participation grade significantly reduced. Consider each class session to be a business meeting. You are expected to come to class on time and prepared. Due to the participatory nature of this class, and the limited amount of class time to demonstrate understanding of the course texts, I will take attendance at every class. Those students who have more than two unexcused absence will have their class participation grade reduced by 5 points.

Out-of-Class/ Independent Learning Expectation

Over the course of the semester, students will spend at least 2 hours per week in class. Required reading for the class meetings and written response papers or projects are expected to take up, on average, 4 hours per week.

Course Evaluation

At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the course through GW's online course evaluation system. It is very important that you take the time to complete an evaluation. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout the course of the semester by contacting any/all of the following:

Dr. Steven Billet
Director, Legislative Affairs Program
sbillet@gwu.edu | 202-994-1149

Dr. Jack Prostko
Associate Dean for Learning and Faculty Development
College of Professional Studies
jackp@gwu.edu | 202-994-3592

Suzanne Farrand
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM
sfarrand@gwu.edu | 202-994-9309

THE COURSE

Legislative Affairs Program Objectives

Upon completion of the Master's degree in Legislative Affairs, students will:

1. Gain both theoretical and practical knowledge related to the U.S. Congress, general issues in the legislative arena, and how to effectively advance legislation;
2. Hone their oral and written communication skills in both theoretical and technical aspects of legislative affairs;
3. Be able to conduct cutting-edge research and engage in effective problem solving by learning critical thinking skills;
4. Learn how to work effectively with others, the value of collaborative work, and will understand ethical issues involved in the legislative arena.

Graduate School Expectations

Students enrolled in a graduate program should take their academic responsibilities seriously and be prepared to meet the following expectations:

1. Utilize effective time management skills so as to complete and submit their assignments on their required due dates and times.
2. Have attained a mastery of written communication skills including proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and word usage.
3. Understand how to properly format in-text citations and references for resources and information integrated into their written assignments.

Course Description and Overview

This course will evaluate the role of the federal judiciary in our constitutional system. Both here and abroad, America's independent judiciary is understood as one of the bulwarks of a government of limited powers and civil liberties. Over the course of this semester, we will evaluate the formal and informal legal authority, and limits, of this critical institution. As we examine the judiciary, we will consider functions of courts, basics of legal analysis, sources of law, structure of courts in the U.S., the nomination and confirmation process, the legal profession, criminal and civil trial courts, the appellate court process, the development of interest groups that attempt to influence the decision making of judges, the judiciary's interaction with the media, legislatures, executives and governmental bureaucracies.

As we consider the development of this unique institution, we will pay particular attention to political and legal history. We will also devote considerable time to a number of politically relevant case studies on race, sexual orientation, reproductive rights, economic rights, and national security.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Understand the primary legal and political sources of judicial power and the structure of the federal judiciary;
2. Acquire historical knowledge of the modern judicial nomination and confirmation process, including institutional actors in the executive and legislative branches;
3. Review the role of interest groups in confirmation and litigation strategy;
4. Participate in legal case studies that involve reading of select case law;
5. Analyze competing claims regarding the appropriate use of judicial power in a democracy;

6. Develop critical reading and analytical skills through weekly writing assignments; and
7. Complete a significant research assignment on a topic of the student's choosing, related to the exercise of judicial power (or non-exercise) in a case with significant political implications.

Course Requirements, Evaluation and Grading

1. Class Participation (20% of final grade)

See Attendance Policy above.

2. Weekly Quizzes (20% of final grade)

Although this is a lecture course, meaningful student participation is expected, and your performance in class will comprise a significant percentage of your final grade. To assist with your class preparation, you will have a 10 question True/False quiz prior to each class. You will have 30 minutes to complete the quiz and it will be on the reading assignment due for that week. Quizzes will be on Blackboard and must be completed by 6 PM on the night of class.

3. Short Essays(20% of final grade)

To assist in your preparation for class, you will be required to submit 3 short essay papers on issues related to the course. Short essays will be due to me via email by 1:00 pm of the day of class. The first short essay will be due on **February 2**. The other 2 short essays will be due on **March 30** and **April 27**. These short essays should be between two and three pages in length. My expectation is not that you provide a comprehensive summary and discussion of the topic. I will provide the topic at least two weeks in advance of the due date. You will be graded on the thoughtfulness of your analysis of the readings, and the manner in which you identify key questions / issues raised by the assignments. Though these are short papers, you will be graded on your writing. Failure to write in complete sentences, with structured paragraphs, and using appropriate grammar will result in reductions to your grade on these papers.

4. Final Paper: (40% of final grade)

There are three components to your final paper, all of which will have separate deadlines and will receive a separate grade. If you need assistance in choosing a topic or finding adequate research materials, contact me early, rather than later, in this process. In the final paper, references to internet resources are not wholly sufficient. You are expected to reference published academic work beyond what was covered in class.

- February 9 (6:00 pm) -- Topic/Thesis Statement Due. This should be no longer than 1 page and should include several sources that you will use in preparing your final paper. **(5 Points)**
- March 23 (6:00 pm) -- Rough Draft Due. The rough draft should be a thoroughly researched and polished draft. This is not a simple outline of a final paper. The expectation is that you will have completed much of your research and writing when you submit this draft. **(15 Points)**
- May 4 (6:00 pm) -- Final Papers Due. The final paper will be a fully cited research paper between 10 and 15 pages in length. **(20 Points)**

Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

Grade*	Grading Standard
A 94-100	Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.
A- 90-93	Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.
B+ 87-89	Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation, but needs some minor work.
B 83-86	Satisfactory work, but needs reworking and more effort. Note that although not a failing grade, at the graduate level, anything below a “B” is viewed as unacceptable.
B- 80-82	You’ve completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the requirements.
C+ 77-79	Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.
C 73-76	Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C- 70-72 (lowest grade to pass)	Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.
F Below 70	Unacceptable performance or inability to submit the assignment.

*Please note that you may be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).

Required Text and Learning Materials

Miller, Mark C. *Judicial Politics in the United States*. Westview Press (2015). (Abbreviated as “JP” below)
 Miller, Mark C. *Exploring Judicial Politics*. Oxford University Press (2002). (Abbreviated as “Exploring”)

Tentative Course Calendar*

*The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress. Students are responsible for keeping up with all adjustments to the course calendar.

Week 1: January 19, 2017

Topic and Content Covered: Class Introduction, Functions of Courts, Basics of Legal Analysis, Source of Law

Reading Due Today: Chapter 1 of JP and Chapter 1 of Exploring

Assignment(s) Due Today: Weekly Quiz #1 is due by 6PM on January 19th.

Assignments Distributed: Short Essay #1

Week 2: January 26, 2017: NO CLASS

Week 3: February 2, 2017

Topic and Content Covered: Structure of Courts in the United States

Reading Due Today: Chapter 2 of JP; *Marbury v. Madison*, 5 U.S. 137 (1803).

Assignment(s) Due Today: Weekly Quiz #2 is due by 6PM and Short Essay #1 is due by 1 PM

Week 4: February 9, 2017

Topic and Content Covered: Judicial Selection

Reading Due Today: Chapter 3 of JP and Chapters 2 and 3 of Exploring

Assignment(s) Due Today: Weekly Quiz #3 is due by 6PM. Topic/Thesis Statement Due.

Week 5: February 16, 2017

Topic and Content Covered: The Legal Profession

Reading Due Today: Chapter 4 of JP and Chapter 4 of Exploring

Assignment(s) Due Today: Weekly Quiz #4 is due by 6PM.

****Begin Working on Rough Draft****

Week 6: February 23, 2017

Topic and Content Covered: Trial Courts: Criminal Cases

Reading Due Today: Chapter 5 of JP and Chapter 5 of Exploring

Assignment(s) Due Today: Weekly Quiz #5 is due by 6PM.

Week 7: March 2, 2017

Topic and Content Covered: Trial Courts: Civil Cases

Reading Due Today: Chapter 6 of JP and Chapter 6 of Exploring

Assignment(s) Due Today: Weekly Quiz #6 is due by 6PM.

Week 8: March 9, 2017

Topic and Content Covered: The Appellate Court Process

Reading Due Today: Chapter 7 of JP and Chapter 9 of Exploring

Assignment(s) Due Today: Weekly Quiz #7 is due by 6PM.

Assignments Distributed: Short Essay #2

Week 9: March 16, 2017 NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Week 10: March 23, 2017

Topic and Content Covered: Studying Decision Making of Appellate Courts

Reading Due Today: Chapter 8 of JP

Assignment(s) Due Today: Weekly Quiz #8 is due by 6PM. **Rough draft due of Final Paper.**

Week 11: March 30, 2017

Topic and Content Covered: Public Opinion, Interest Groups, the Media and the Courts

Reading Due Today: Chapter 9 of JP and Chapter 15 of Exploring

Assignment(s) Due Today: Weekly Quiz #9 is due by 6PM. Short Essay #2 is due by 1PM.

Week 12: April 6, 2017

Topic and Content Covered: Legislatures and the Courts

Reading Due Today: Chapter 10 of JP and Chapter 19 of Exploring

Assignment(s) Due Today: Weekly Quiz #10 is due by 6PM.

Week 13: April 13, 2017

Topic and Content Covered: Executives and the Courts

Reading Due Today: Chapter 11 of JP

Assignment(s) Due Today: Weekly Quiz #11 is due by 6PM.

Assignments Distributed: Short Essay #3

Week 14: April 20, 2017

Topic and Content Covered: Courts and Governmental Bureaucracies

Reading Due Today: Chapter 12 of JP

Assignment(s) Due Today: Weekly Quiz #12 is due by 6PM.

Week 15: April 27, 2017

Topic and Content Covered: Make-Up Class if necessary/Assistance with Final Paper

Assignment(s) Due Today: Short Essay #3.

Week 16: May 4, 2017

Final Paper Due

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