

Professor Samuel P. Stafford

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 5:30-8:30 pm  
via Zoom and by appointment  
352-273-2372 (Office)

Michelle C. Topolski (TA)

Office Hours: Mon/Wed 8:20-9:20 am.  
Will take place across from Starbucks on 1st floor of Library West  
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Constitutional Law  
POS 3603, Section 17402  
Rm 207 Leigh Hall  
Period 1 MWF

## INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

This survey course is designed to study and understand American Constitutional Law. It is not a course solely concerning "law" or the "U.S. Constitution", but rather this course seeks to expose students to broad legal reasoning and historical analysis that will explain the rationale embraced by the United States Supreme Court, as well as State and Local Governments, as they all seek to preserve or expand their respective governmental powers by limiting that of others, within the parameters of the U.S. Constitution.

Together we will learn the history, structure, terminology and basic operating rules of the American judicial and constitutional law systems. Furthermore, each student will also embrace this unique method of legal analysis and reasoning by preparing select "case briefs", and by actively participating in a teaching approach known as the modified Socratic Method, so that the Constitution is seen and confirmed as being alive/adaptable, and hence more viable.

As stated by my colleague and predecessor in this course, "Because the student is developing case analysis and legal reasoning skills, the student must be able to think to be successful in this course." A multifaceted examination of relevant substantive and procedural segments of the U.S. Constitution, relevant current events, as well as interpretation of the same by the United States Supreme Court will comprise a major focus of this course. Given our collective learning approach, there will be an underlying emphasis on each student's evolving ability to hone and continually sharpen her or his reasoning/analytical skills, as we approach the study of American Constitutional law through our readings, cases, guest speakers, videos, research paper(s), Group and/or any individual projects.

Major course content and attention will focus on:

1. Political-social impact of the U.S Constitution on everyday aspects of life;
2. The role and responsibilities of courts in the management and/or resolution of U.S. Constitutional policy application and conflict;
3. The nature, limitations and evolving capacity of the United States Supreme Court to shape and address most challenging U.S. Constitutional problems and solutions;
4. The divergent and sometimes interconnecting roles of the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of the federal government, vis-a-vis the U.S. Constitution; and
5. The unique, historical tension between the state and federal government as defined and determined by the U.S. Constitution.

## REQUIRED READINGS AND MATERIALS

William Peden, Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia, 1955, (Chapel Hill)

Lee Epstein and Thomas G. Walker, Institutional Powers and Constraints (CQ Press).  
[Most current edition acceptable]

(Numerous photocopied & links to cases, readings, interpretive materials.)

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Each student will complete all required reading assignments, brief cases prior to each class meeting, **and** be prepared to discuss the cases/readings.
2. Each student will be expected to read and thoroughly digest the Articles and the Amendments to the United States Constitution, and have an expressed working knowledge of same, as we progress through the course this semester.

3. There will be two (2) major examinations: a midterm and a cumulative final exam. All major exams will only be given during the semester.
4. There will be several, announced and unannounced quizzes during the semester. These quizzes cannot be made up or taken again.
5. Additionally, each student or group of students, will prepare written assignment(s) and/or class presentation(s) on provisions of the U.S. Constitution.
6. One research paper (27 pages) will be assigned during the semester. The research paper must be turned in on time, or there will be a corresponding full-letter grade reduction in the grade earned by the research paper, for each calendar day the paper is late; **OR** the paper may NOT be accepted.
7. Due to the nature of the course, class attendance and participation is mandatory, and will count toward your final grade. There will be a heavy emphasis on student- teacher interchange and class discussion.
8. Class participation/attendance, assigned research paper(s), (group project), quizzes, short-written assignments, etc., will reflect about 35% of the student's final grade; the midterm will count about 25%; while the cumulative final examination will comprise approximately 40% of the total grade in this course. See <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-Lading-policies/for-current-University-of-Florida-grading-policies>.
9. Each student has the individual responsibility to read, comprehend and fully comply with all requirements of the course as listed on the Syllabus and any additional ones made in class, during the semester.
10. Each student is required and invited to consult with the professor prior to dropping or withdrawing from the course. **This is an important requirement.**
11. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner. Students have the responsibility to research and locate when the evaluation period opens, and must complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via [ufl.bluera.com/ufl/](http://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.

## ZOOM PRIVACY CONSENT STATEMENT (IF & When Applicable)

Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live, per permission of the professor. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is strictly prohibited.

## ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting our [Get Started page](#). It is important for students to share/discuss/request their need for various accommodations, as well as an accommodation letter they may receive from DRC, with their instructor, as early as possible in the semester.

## AI/SUPPLEMENTS: EXPRESSLY FORBIDDEN

Any use, reference, inclusion or reliance upon ChatGPT, Google BARD, Chatsonic, Microsoft Bing Chat, Github Copilot, Fusion Chat, YouChat, Law ChatGPT, Clearbrief, Case Text, any known-or-subsequently developed artificial intelligence (AI) supplements, as well as any similar type of **unauthorized** AI writing or research assistance/supplements, not mentioned here OR that may be invented during the semester, are EXPRESSLY prohibited and forbidden for use in this course. Any use, inclusion, indication or infusion of any material from any-or-all of these or similar sources, will be viewed and considered by the professor as a class violation, and the offending student shall be immediately assessed for disciplinary action. Finally, the ability to remain in this course during the **semester** will be determined by the professor and University.