

Professor Samuel P. Stafford

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 5:30-8:30 pm, Anderson 203  
and by appointment. Office Hours will be conducted over Zoom.  
352-273-2372 (Office)

Richard O. Wells (TA)

Office Hours: Mon/Wed/Fri 8:15-9:30 am. Office hours  
will take place immediately after our class period during 2<sup>nd</sup> period.  
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POS 3603, Section 2386, Class # 19914  
Online/Distance Learning  
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”. Rather this course seeks to expose students to broad legal reasoning and historical analysis that will explain the rationale used 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, and limit that of others, within the parameters of the U.S. Constitution.

Together we will learn the structure, terminology and basic operating rules of the American judicial and constitutional law systems. Furthermore, each student will also embrace a 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 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 multi-faceted examination of relevant substantive and procedural segments of the U.S. Constitution, current events, as well as interpretation of same by the United States Supreme Court, will comprise the 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 his or her reasoning/analytical skills, as we approach the study of American Constitutional law through our readings, cases, videos, research paper(s), Group and/or individual Projects, and guest speakers.

Major course content and attention will focus on:

1. Political-social impact of the U.S Constitution on everyday life;
2. The role and responsibilities of courts in the management and/or resolution of U.S. Constitutional policy conflict;
3. The nature, limitations and evolving capacity of the United States Supreme Court in shaping and addressing U.S. Constitutional problems and concerns;
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 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, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2014 (CQ Press). [Most current edition also acceptable]

(Numerous photocopied 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.
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. In addition, each student will prepare and complete short-answer assignments during the semester.
5. During the semester each student or group of students, will prepare written assignment(s) and/or class presentation(s) on particular provisions of the U.S. Constitution, and/or relevant current events that impact the Constitution, as assigned by the Professor.

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 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, (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-grading-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.
10. Each student is 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 will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can 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

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. 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 prohibited.

## ACCOMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISSABILITIES

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 their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.