Objectives

Law will be examined as an institutionalized field of contests over the rules of social life. We will open the semester with readings on the historical development of core institutions such as courts, codes, constitutions, criminals, and counsellors. With this common ground, we will then turn our attention to some of the questions and concerns that sociologists (and other law & society scholars) raise with respect to these institutions. For example: To what extent can we use changes in legal form to understand changes in social relations? How do some legal rules acquire legitimacy for members of a society—and why are other rules ignored or despised? Do legal rules (and their enforcers) inevitably serve powerful political or economic interests—or does law have some autonomy? How do legal institutions enable and constrain movements for social justice? We will consider this last question through a study of the history of racial segregation in schools and the legal and cultural significance of Brown v. Board of Education. Over the course of the semester, students will be expected to:

- Appreciate the challenge and complexity of living in accord with a rule of law.
- Cultivate their legal literacy by approaching legal rules and institutions from several perspectives, including those of legal professionals, active citizens, and social critics.
- Enhance their research and writing skills through the completion of a course notebook.

Books &tc.

The following books (available at the Oberlin College Bookstore) are required for this course:


Other books, articles, films, webpages, etc. will be required or recommended from time to time.
throughout the semester. Students will be given advance notice of such requirements so that they may acquire copies of such materials and prepare for class discussions. Students are expected to read/view/study all required materials prior to the class session in which they will be discussed, and to bring their copies of these materials to class.

- Objectives
- Books &tc.
- Engagements
- Reckonings
- Literacies
- Inquiries
- Niceties

Engagements

This course will be a sustained engagement with the required texts, and our class sessions will typically include both lecture and discussion regarding these texts. Although subject to change, at the discretion of the instructor, the following schedule of engagements will help students to plan their work over the course of the term.

Week 01: 2006.09.04—2006.09.10
Read/discuss this Syllabus. Read/discuss White (1985: 60-72). Read/discuss the Oberlin College Honor Code.
2006.09.05 (T) Classes begin. Enrollment, drop/add begin. Happy Syllabus Day!

Week 02: 2006.09.11—2006.09.17
2006.09.14 (R) Add/Drop deadline.

Week 03: 2006.09.18—2006.09.24
Read/discuss Friedman (2004: 37-72). (Other readings TBD.)

Week 04: 2006.09.25—2006.10.01
Read/discuss Friedman (2004: 75-159). (Other readings TBD.)

Week 05: 2006.10.02—2006.10.08
2006.10.12 (R) Course Notebook (MIDTERM) is due today.

Midterm course evaluations today.

Week 07: 2006.10.16—2006.10.22
Fall Recess: R & R

Week 08: 2006.10.23—2006.10.29
Read/discuss Sutton (2001: 61-98). (Other readings TBD.)

Student/Instructor Conferences
2006.10.26 (R) Midterm grades available via PRESTO.

Week 09: 2006.10.30—2006.11.05
Read/discuss Sutton (2001: 99-132). (Other readings TBD.)

Student/Instructor Conferences
2006.10.31 (T) Happy Halloween!

Week 10: 2006.11.06—2006.11.12
Read/discuss Sutton (2001: 133-160). (Other readings TBD.)
2006.11.07 (T) P/NP, CR/NE, or withdraw deadline for a full semester course.

Week 11: 2006.11.13—2006.11.19

Week 12: 2006.11.20—2006.11.26

2006.11.23 (R) Happy Thanksgiving! (No class today.)

Week 13: 2006.11.27—2006.12.03
Read/discuss Rosenberg (1991: 9-36). (Other readings TBD.)

Week 14: 2006.12.04—2006.12.10
Panel meetings. Announce decisions.


Last day of classes...

Exam Week: Don’t Panic (Breathe...)
2006.12.19 (T) Course Notebook (FINAL) is due (4:00 pm).

Next Year...
2007.01.08 (M) Fall Grades available on PRESTO.

• Objectives • Books &tc. • Engagements • Reckonings •

• Literacies • Inquiries • Niceties •

Reckonings

Two senses of 'reckoning' are important in this course. First and foremost, our reckonings are our considered opinions regarding reading and research that we have done. Such reckonings will be recorded throughout the semester in a Course Notebook. This notebook will have three parts:

Mini-Essays: Students will write six mini-essays in response to questions posed by the instructor. Each mini-essay should be 300-500 words long (approximately 1-2 pages). Three of these essays must be completed by 2006.10.12, and the other three by 2006.12.20. Each of these essays is worth 0-5 points.

Legal Institution Essay: Students will write an essay about a legal institution of their choosing. The essay should be 2000-2500 words long (approximately 8-10 pages). Each student must propose a legal institution for study, and explain why she or he has chosen it, by 2006.10.12, and each student must complete his or her essay by 2006.12.20. The essay should make appropriate references to the sources listed in the bibliography. The final essay will be worth 0-20 points.

Annotated Bibliography: Students will compile a bibliography recording their research regarding their legal institution. Each bibliography must include at least 15 sources, at least five of which must be annotated. Each annotation should be 250-300 words long, and each citation must be in proper form (according to the ASA Style Guide, 2d ed.). Each source entry will be worth 0-1 points (to a maximum of 15 points), and each annotation will be worth 0-5 points (to a maximum of 25 points). At least one of the annotated entries must refer to a scholarly source (i.e., a peer-reviewed article, a law review, or another source approved by the instructor), and no more than five of the bibliography entries may be websites, blogs, etc. Ten entries must be completed by 2006.10.12, two of which must be annotated; the remaining entries are due by 2006.12.20.

The course notebook must be completed and delivered to the instructor in both a Midterm and a Final version, in either a .doc format or a .html format. Students are expected to submit their notebooks in both printed form and as an email attachment.

Grading Scale
The second sense of 'reckoning' is the calculation of a grade for each student. In this course, student reckonings (sense #01) will contribute to student grades (sense #02) according to this Grading Scale. Students may earn a total of 100 points in this course: 90 from the Course Notebook and 10 from class participation. Letter grades will be assigned, at the end of the course, according to the Grading Scale. It gives you a worst-case formula: For each point range, the scale shows you the lowest possible letter grade. Higher grades might be awarded depending upon overall class performance. If the highest-scoring student/s have not earned A’s, but I am convinced that students have (as a whole) been working diligently, then I will add enough points to the high scores to move them into the A-range and the same number of points to all of the other scores (moving everyone up a bit). Of course, it is entirely possible—though extremely unlikely, in my experience—that all students in the class will earn A’s. It is also possible—though again, extremely unlikely—that everyone will earn F’s.

Objectives

One of the objectives of this course is to enhance your legal literacy. I assume that some other literacies are brought to the course.

(Literal) Literacy: You should feel very comfortable reading and writing in the English language; otherwise, this course will be a nightmare. By 'literacy' I do not mean the casual styles of email, text messaging, etc. I mean the proper English you find in edited texts such as newspapers and books. Written work should not include misspelled words, ungrammatical sentences, or incoherent paragraphs.

Computer Literacy: You should feel very comfortable using a computer, especially using word processors and/or text editors, browsing the worldwide web, and downloading files; if you don’t know how to do such things, you should be comfortable that you can develop those skills early in the semester.

Inquiries

Students will almost certainly have questions about this Syllabus, the various readings, their
research, and other aspects of this course. There will be opportunities to raise questions during class and after class. The instructor will also be available for drop-in office hours and by appointment as indicated at the top of this Syllabus. A detailed guide to the Course Notebook, a Course Bibliography, and a Frequently-Asked-Questions page (the Course FAQ) will be posted early in the semester.

- Objectives
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Niceties

Students are reminded that they are bound by the Oberlin College Honor Code. Although students are encouraged to give and receive assistance from each other with respect to their ongoing research, and to discuss the readings with other students, all written work in this course should be your own.

Students with documented disabilities are invited to contact the instructor to make reasonable accommodations.

All students are encouraged to participate actively in this course and take responsibility for their own learning. And all are reminded of the immortal words of Bill S. Preston, Esq.: "Be excellent to each other."

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