



Seminar on Courts & Judiciary
Fall 2026
Sul Ross State University

SYLLABUS

Professor: Benjamin Barrientes, 109A Morelock Hall
Email: benjamin.barrientes@sulross.edu
[432.299-8527](tel:432.299-8527)

Course Description:

Through the use of classical and contemporary readings, students will study the structure of courts in America, the role of courtroom actors, and court processes. We will examine case law and foundational readings in American Jurisprudence, Federal and State Judicial Systems, procedures prior to a criminal trial, the criminal trial and its aftermath, the Civil Court Process, and Implementation & Impact of Judicial Policies.

In the interest of keeping expenses at a minimum for students, the instructor will not assign a textbook. Readings and other materials will be uploaded on Blackboard or students will receive them through email.

Course Objectives- upon completion of the course students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of federal & court system and the judicial process;
2. Think critically about American Jurisprudence;
3. Think critically about the role of courtroom actors;
4. Utilize concepts of procedure and apply them in articulating on judicial policies;
5. Dispel assumptions that they make in developing their own ideas on courts & judiciary;
6. Develop critical writing skills.

Texas Domain III Competency 19: The teacher understands and applies critical thinking knowledge and skills to plan, organize/implement instruction, and assess learning.

Texas Domain III Competency 23: The teacher understands and applies knowledge of core concepts of Courts and Judiciary including ways that individuals and groups achieve their goals through distinct and unique systems and approaches for thought.

In order to receive accommodation on exams or assignments, proper documentation must first be provided to the Office of Counseling and Accessibility Services. Contact the office to set up an accommodations meeting by calling (432) 837-8203. Students must then present this documentation to the instructor as soon as possible so that accommodation may be arranged.

Americans with Disability Act Statement:

Course Policies:

This is an online course; however, please observe that Sul Ross State University has a zero-tolerance policy on cheating, plagiarism, or collusion. Procedures for dealing with these acts are addressed in the Scholastic Dishonesty Policy. These policies are meant to ensure the academic integrity of SRSU.

Distance/Online Education Statement:

Students enrolled in distance/online courses have equal access to SRSU's academic support services. Please visit the SRSU website if you have any questions on accessing such resources. Students are expected to correspond through Sul Ross email accounts and submit assignments through Blackboard. Blackboard requires secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. If Blackboard is not available then you are required to email your work directly to the Instructor.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to communicate with me and complete all assignments in a timely manner. Students are expected to login to the class frequently so as to ensure full participation in the class. Please report any login issues as soon as possible by emailing me immediately.

Grading for this course will be based on the quality of student's work. This Seminar will require 2 papers (each valued at 33% of your grade) and a series of written assignments (the remaining 34% of your grade) based on our weekly readings.

Grading system: A: 100-90 B: 89-80 C: 79-70 D: 69-60 F: 59 or less

From reading your responses to my initial questions, it is clear that each of you has worked very hard to get to this juncture in your respective academic careers.

I welcome hearing from you often; I anticipate that each of you will identify specific interests within the body of the material that we will cover. I welcome enquiries as early as possible so that I can provide better direction and support for your papers.

The initial reading will be instrumental in helping you to get situated with the examination of the American Courts & Judiciary. Some of you revealed having an opportunity to study the American Courts & Judiciary within tasks that you encounter at work. That is an advantage and so I encourage you to find ways to learn new things. By taking this course, my objective is to see your critical writing skills improve through developing your critical thinking skills.

This being an online course, I would like to ask that you communicate with me as often as you can. This will serve the positive effect of a reminder that you are out there engaged in the reading and thinking about this monstrous topic.

I look forward to working with each of you.

PLEASE NOTE: A course schedule will be provided separately during the first week of class and will be posted on Blackboard.