

COURSE OUTLINE
PLS 310: The Constitution and the Supreme Court
Revised/Approved: December 2006

Department:	History
Credit Hours:	3
Prerequisite:	None
General Education:	5.2 Historical Consciousness and 2.2 Critical Thinking Ability
College Learning Outcomes:	(5) Historical Consciousness and (2) Critical Thinking Ability

I. Course Description

This course studies the history and development of constitutional law from the Constitutional Convention in 1787 to the present. Special emphasis is placed on the structure and philosophy of the Constitution, major Supreme Court decisions from *Marbury v. Madison* to the present, and the character of the Supreme Court from the era of Chief Justice John Marshall to the current membership. In the process, students will learn basic legal principles, federal court procedures, and the practice of making legal arguments on the constitutional level.

II. Purpose of the Course

Students will be required to read, speak, and write on the sources presented in order to describe the story of the American Constitution and the historic decisions of the Supreme Court in their own words. The goal will also be for students to understand constitutional law as a creative process that occurs as men and women make decisions over time about the best way to live in a democracy.

III. College Learning Outcomes and Objectives

- (1a, 1c, 1d) Students will develop **Communication Competence** through oral reports, critical essay writing, narrative writing, and class presentations.
- (2a, 2b) Students will develop **Critical Thinking Ability** through analysis of Supreme Court Cases beginning with the historic decision of *Marbury vs. Madison* and continuing up to current cases on the Supreme Court docket.
- (5a, 5b, 5c) Students will develop **Historical Consciousness** through lectures, reading, speaking, and writing assignments.

IV. Program Learning Outcomes

- (1) Students will be able to identify and analyze the main event, persons, institutions, trends, and developments in American Constitutional History through writing and report assignments.

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- (2) Students will demonstrate competence in using the historical method to research, write, and speak about major Supreme Court decisions in accordance with the best practices in the field.
- (4) Students will be able to identify and analyze primary sources related to major Supreme Court cases and secondary sources on the writing of the Constitution that are significant to American Constitutional History.

V. Course Objectives

- 1. Students should be able to master the story of the development of the American Constitutional law from 1787 to the present through short and long answer essay questions in the midterm and final examinations in order to enhance citizenship skills (**LO 1a, 1c, and 1d**).
- 2. Students should be able to develop skills related to critical thinking in both speech and writing by learning how to analyze the main arguments in the major Supreme Court cases in United States History (**LO 2a and 2b**).
- 3. Students should be able to comprehend the difference between primary and secondary sources, and develop the ability to analyze both types of sources (**LO 5a, 5b, and 5c**).
- 4. Students should be able to develop historical consciousness through the analysis of the major Supreme Court Cases of American History (**LO 5a, 5b, and 5c**).

VI. Topical Outline

Introduction and the Framing of the Constitution
The Marshall Court, Article I, and Amendments 1 and 2
The Taney Court, Article II, and Amendments 3 and 4
The Big Business Court, Article III, and Amendments 5 and 6
The Court of Justice Holmes, Article IV, and Amendments 7 and 8
The Court vs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Article V, and Amendments 9 and 10
The Warren Court, Article VI, and Amendments 13, 14, and 15
The Recent Court (Burger and Rhenquist), Article VII, and the Remaining Amendments