

EXPLORING LAW AND LEADERSHIP: DECIDING YOUR LEGAL PATH

Fall 2007, Course #01:090:320:29

Frelinghuysen B3

Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey

Contact Information

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Course Description

People often provide priceless information that can never be found sifting through books. This First-year Interest Group Seminar is geared towards introducing various types of relevant information to prospective pre-law students. Since there is no pre-law major at Rutgers, this class will give students tips, techniques, and ideas about how to pursue a pre-law path. In addition to meeting diverse peers who are going through the same experiences as you, you will learn many things about Rutgers, which will be an important part of your life for the next 4 years. We will interact with highly motivated students, faculty, and people in the law field that will provide valuable insight into goals for your future. We will learn about law careers, LSAT tips, visit a criminal trial, learn about Rutgers's resources, and much more, and then stage a final mock trial to gain a slight experience of our possible future careers.

Course Goals

The goals and objective of this FIGS are:

- To ease the transition from a comfortable high school life to a hectic college life
- To meet, share experiences with, and form long term bonds with First-year students
- To find opportunities at an early stage to assist in a pre-law path
- To meet upperclassmen students, faculty, and professionals that will guide your future and help you network
- To learn about the academic and leisure-activity resources available at Rutgers University
- To aid in figuring out your pre-law path and gain experience about professions

Required Materials

There are no required texts for this class. However, you will need a notebook and a folder for this FIGS. Please save all materials handed out and handed back, and you may need them for reference later on in the class, or even in the future. Although there may not be too many opportunities for standard "note-taking", there will be times when you will want to jot down a website or a phone number, or even some relevant or interesting information.

Course Format

This is a one credit class that is graded either PASS or NO CREDIT. Remember - we are all peers, so utmost care should be given to listen to the diverse opinions of all during our class. A seminar style discussion is imperative and everyone should and will voice their opinion. There will be guest speakers visiting throughout the course, and utmost care will be given to listen to them and show respect. **Absolutely no text messages, cell phones, or sidebar conversations will be tolerated.** E-mail will be my main form of communication, so I strongly urge you to e-mail me with any question, problem, or concern you may have.

Grading and Assignments:

This course is graded PASS or NO CREDIT. A minimum of 80 points out of 100 must be acquired to achieve credit for this class, with a minimum of 10 of those points from the final project. Determination and enthusiasm will also be considered when assigning final grades.

All assignments must be typed with size 12 Times New Roman fonts and double spaced. Assignments are due at the beginning of class, unless otherwise specified.

Assignment	Points
1. Attendance (2 points per class) Participation (2 points per class)	40 points
2. 2 Opinion/Reaction Papers – 3 Pages each (5 points each)	10 points
3. Law Brief	5 points
4. Homework Assignments -5 total (3 points each)	15 points
5. 2 Quizzes	10 points
6. Final Project (minimum 10 points required)	20 Points
Total Possible Points	100 Points

1. Attendance and Participation 40 points (4 points per class)

Attendance is MANDATORY in this FIGS class. Since we only meet once a week for 10 weeks, we have a lot of material to cover. You will be given three points for just attending class. Consideration is given to extenuating circumstances, and therefore only one legitimate medical or personal **UNEXCUSED ABSENCE** will be permitted, which should be communicated to me as soon as possible. **If more than one unexcused absence occurs, it will result in an automatic NO CREDIT.** If unforeseen circumstances occur, please talk to me, and flexibility will be given to you depending on your situation.

Participation credit can be easily accrued by voicing your opinion or contributing during each class. Since the class is built around a small seminar style format, we will be engaging in debates and active discussions. Therefore, opportunities to earn credit will be plentiful by participating in class.

2. Opinion/Reaction Papers (2-3 pages) 10 points (5 per paper)

Two times during the semester, you are required to write a short, 2-3 page double spaced paper about a given topic. This is not a research or expository paper, but a time for you to talk to me and give me your view on topics that we've covered in class, ideas that you have had, and questions that you might have. A guiding prompt will be provided, which can be used as a launching pad to write about something that you may be interested to write about. Since leniency is given regarding the substance of the paper, I expect these papers to be thought provoking and interesting. Merely reiterating topics covered in class or stating vague, broad ideas will not result in full credit. Specific dates are listed later in the syllabus.

3. Law Brief 5 points

Law briefs are used for many purposes in the legal profession. We will learn about writing briefs in class, and your assignment will be to write a brief based on the information given to you. Points will be determined based on inclusion of all relevant information and sticking to the template. This is not only a good learning activity, but also a chance to show your creative side. Specific date is listed later in the syllabus.

4. Homework Assignments 15 points (3 per assignment)

There will be small homework tasks assigned throughout the semester, which will include various activities. Homework assignments are an easy and helpful way to earn points, and it is strongly urged that these be completed as assigned.

5. Quizzes 10 Points (5 per quiz)

You will be given quizzes twice throughout the course. This short, 10 minute quiz will cover the reading assigned for that week, and other general points covered in the class material or by the guest speakers.

6. Final Project 20 points

Throughout the course, we will be dealing with various aspects of the law career, law school, and the academic path at Rutgers. But what do lawyers do? We will be creating our own case for our final project, where you will be encouraged to show your creativity and put into use everything you've learned in class. During our first class, I will assign you your final project groups, with whom you'll be working with throughout the semester. As the class progresses, you will be given more information about the project and details about assignments. Although limited in class time will be allotted for logistical planning, it is imperative that your groups meet regularly out of class to plan your project. At our last class, we will present our projects.

*** Extra Credit 5 points**

Rutgers University offers many programs for undergraduate students to take a head start on their law career. To gain extra credit, you will be required to attend an event relating to law (such as a Pre-law Society meeting or a lecture sponsored by the Eagleton Institute of Politics), and then submit a one paper report on the event, time, date, and what you learned from it.

Weekly Course Outline

Week #1- Tuesday, September 11: Get to know each other!

Class activities: Syllabus review, icebreaker games, introduction to class, division into groups for final project. Read article regarding ethics pertaining to law and then discussion about career goals and expectations at Rutgers.

Homework: Do research online on *Minersville School District v. Gobbits* and bring in a printout of what you found. Read the case and be ready to present your opinions.

Week #2- Tuesday, September 18: Information Literacy

Class activities: Meet in Alexander Library Room 413. Learn about internet databases, researching tips and methods. Discussion on researching tips and time to browse search engines and explore individually. Tour of Legal Collections and the library.

Homework: Research with new databases about public opinion on *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*. Write short summary on how you researched, if that was different or better than your first case, and write why you think the *Minersville School District v. Gobbits* case was overturned by the *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnett* case.

Week #3- Tuesday, September 25: Academic Success

Class activities: **Quiz 1.** Talk about time management, the advantages of planning ahead, different methods of time management. Discussion on the importance of class, study skills, office hours, college life, etc. Internship and career guide presentation from Career Services.

Homework: Submit a skeleton plan for your final project. Everyone must hand one in with their name on it, although members of a group may have identical sheets. Bring in a copy of a resume you already have.

Week #4- Tuesday, October 2: Career Development

Class activities: talks about LSAT puzzles and problems, cost and time commitment for law school applications, learn about resume writing. Divide into groups and do peer critiques of resumes. Go through resume templates and pick the best one. (Possible guest – someone from Career Services)

Homework: Bring in a copy of your resume that incorporates all the elements we've learned.

Week #5- Tuesday, October 9: Diversity

Class activities: Equality University activity, including personal experiences. Then, Discussion about the Michigan Affirmative Actions cases – teach the legal precedent of Affirmative action from *Brown v. Board of Education* until now. A debate on affirmative action. Finally, a discussion about the advantages of multiculturalism and individuality.

Homework: Bring in a list of 10 questions (please bring two copies) you may have about anything relating to Rutgers. Please work with your groups on the opening and closing statements for your final projects. Read *NJ v. TLO*

Week #6- Tuesday, October 16: Peer Panel

Class activities: Possible students: Ruchi Pandya, Jeffrey Chang, Harinath Amarnath, Krista Kohlmann, and Summer Faruqi. Listen to accomplished upperclassmen of Rutgers University and derive ideas of their own paths. Ask questions about classes, jobs, activities, experience, housing, involvement, and anything else you desire. Debate about *NJ v. TLO*.

Homework: **Paper #1 –Dissenting Opinion** – a 2-3 page paper about a supreme court case you don't agree with, and why. (Possible case – Roe v. Wade)

Week #7- Tuesday, October 23: Personal Wellness

Class activities: discussion about dorm life, dining hall food, hygiene, etc. Formal introduction to the claims against McDonald's for obesity and discussion about student opinion. Introduction on how to write a legal brief.

Homework: **Brief** –after researching the issue, write your own brief about this McDonald's case, were it to be presented in the Supreme Court – be creative!

Week #8- Tuesday, October 30: Faculty

Class activities: **Quiz 2.** Professor Daniel Tichenor to talk about faculty life, experience, research, grading, classes, etc for 30 minutes. Read excerpts from *100 Semesters* by William Chace, and then discussion about faculty, research, Aresty, and other options at Rutgers.

Homework: **Paper #2 – Shattered Myths** – a 2-3 page paper about what you've learned about law up until this point in the class, and how has that differed from what you thought previously.

Week #9- Tuesday, November 6: Guest Lecturer

Class activities: Public Defender (Elliot Wiesner) will talk about trial techniques and working for the people. Work on Final Projects.

Homework: Work on Project! Please bring in everything you will be saying on paper!

Week #10- Tuesday, November 13: Final Project

Class activities: Present your final project and watch your peers present

Homework: Keep in touch, and have a great first semester at Rutgers!