

# **The American Judicial System**

**CRJU 205**

**Fall 2013**

**Victor Ascolillo, Ph.D., J.D.**

**Email: [vascolillo@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:vascolillo@westfield.ma.edu)**

**Tel: (413)572-5311 or home (413)562-0276**

**Course Description:** This course will examine the development of law and the American legal system. It will consider the problems related to the meaning and uses of law, the organizational hierarchy of the federal and Massachusetts courts; and the role of the courts in the criminal justice system. While the course will examine the historical foundation for the American legal system, the course also will investigate the recent development of whole new areas of law. To quote Professor Stephen Ford: “Perhaps there was never such a time as now when the current changes in American society have so immediately and so deeply left their marks on the legal system.” For example, within the past few years the legal system has been asked to respond on a massive scale to claims from racial minorities, from women, from political opponents of the government and the United States, from the poor, from the young, and others who perceive themselves to be without political or economic power.

In addition, the course will introduce the student to what every educated person should know about law and the legal

system. Time permitting, the course will examine the following topics:

- The Sources of Law;
- What is Law? - An introduction to Jurisprudence;
- The Objectives of law;
- The Origin of Law in the United States;
- Reading and Briefing Cases
- Computer Assisted Legal Research Using Lexis/Nexis
- Constitutional Policymaking
- The Concept of Due Process
- Criminal and Civil Law
- Equal Protection and the Law
- Tort Law
- The American Judicial System – both federal and state with emphasis on the Massachusetts Judicial System
- The Concept of Jurisdiction
- Limitations on Seeking Judicial Relief Including the “Statute of Limitations”.