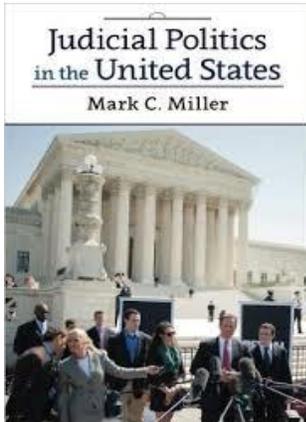


POLS 105 004
Law, Courts and Politics
Online Hybrid with In-Class on Thursday's; 3:45-5:00 p.m.; Parenzo 109

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Required Text: Mark Miller, JUDICIAL POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES, Westview Press, 2015 (ISBN: 978-0-8133-4679-3)



It is also advisable to check the news daily, in order to be informed about current topics which could also serve as discussion material as it relates to this course.

Course Description: This is a hybrid course which has an online component and also meets in class once a week. Law, Courts and Politics will introduce students to the American judicial system, and to the policy-making role of courts in the United States. The course looks at the way American courts operate, and at how judges and courts are both influenced by, and part of, the larger political system. A major theme considers the policy-making role of the courts, with a focus on particular policy areas where the federal and state courts have had a great influence. We will look at some controversial policy areas where the courts have been particularly active, such as in defining the rights of students in public schools, abortion rights, rights to personal privacy, racial equality, gender discrimination and same-sex marriage.

We will also focus on how the courts in America interact with the other parts of the political and governmental system. How do courts relate to the legislative branch of government? How do courts influence the President and the administrative agencies of government? How do political factors like elections, interest groups, the media and public opinion affect the courts? What is the proper role for unelected judges in a democratic political system? We will look at the role the courts have played, what the framers originally intended, and the arguments for and against "activist" courts. Is it better for judges to be elected or appointed? We will describe and analyze the judicial process, with special attention given to the function of the U.S. Supreme Court. Throughout the course we will evaluate the role of the judiciary in a democracy, and attempt to present a vision of the courts as fully integrated into the political process.