

Introduction to Legal Reasoning: Reading and Writing

Political Science 104 J
Winter 2022
Tuesdays 6:30 p.m. – 9:20 p.m.
Location: CSB 001

Zoom Information:

Professor Maysa E. Nichter
Department of Political Science
E-mail: mnichter@ucsd.edu
Office Hours: Fridays 10 a.m. – Noon
TA
Furkan Benliogullari / fbenliog@ucsd.edu

Course Description and Goals

The ability to write and argue effectively is one of the most noted benefits of a legal education. In this course, students will learn the basics of legal reasoning by learning to read and brief case law and prepare objective legal documents.

This course has the prerequisites of POLI104A/B. The learnings of WHAT courts rule in these cases and HOW cases travel through the court system are necessary foundations to understanding WHY the courts rule the way they do. Little time in this course will be devoted to the structure of the legal system, but you can certainly use landmark cases from those classes to help motivate your learning in this course.

The intent of this course is to provide a sample law school experience to undergraduates at UCSD and to strongly prepare undergraduates to excel in law school. This course may also be strongly beneficial to students who plan to pursue graduate studies and/or work outside of the legal profession. Class session will involve going over assigned reading, introduction of concepts, and practice exercises. Students are expected to complete assigned reading and any exercises before class to enable active participation in course discussion and activities. Unlike law school, where students often compete for the highest grade, this course is structured so that everyone can succeed and in fact, are more likely to succeed when they are open with discussion and constructive criticism.

The course will be roughly divided as follows:

Weeks 1 through 3:

The Lawyer's **Role** and the Legal System
How Lawyers **Read**

Weeks 4 and 5:

How Lawyers **Think and Analyze**

Weeks 6 through 10:
How Lawyers Write

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- o read and analyze statutory law and case law
- o apply legal rules to a set of facts
- o identify and formulate issues
- o analogize, distinguish and synthesize cases
- o apply case and statutory law in an analytical framework utilizing legal reasoning principles of to write an objective legal memorandum
- o apply case and statutory law in an analytical framework utilizing legal reasoning principles of to advise a hypothetical client

Digital Platform: The digital platform for this course is **Canvas**, at canvas.ucsd.edu. Course readings and assignments will be found there, and you will also submit all written assignments (except for the final exam) there as well.

Course Schedule

Week	Lecture Topic	Assignments for the Week
1 (Jan 4)	Introduction The Lawyer's Role and the Legal System Legal Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Synthesis</i>, Ch. 2• <i>Foster v. Panera</i>
2 (Jan 11)	Reading and Analyzing Cases Attorney Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Practical Guide to Legal Writing and Legal Method</i>, Ch. 3• <i>Garcia v. Spunsteak</i>
3 (Jan 18)	Reading Statutes Reading Commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Practical Guide to Legal Writing and Legal Method</i>, Ch. 8• <i>Title VII of the Civil Rights Act</i> (skim)• <i>Commentary samples</i> (skim)
4 (Jan 25)	Legal Reasoning and Analysis – Applying Rules to Facts and Introduction to “IRAC” In-Class Exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Synthesis</i>, Ch. 7

5 (Feb 1)	Legal Reasoning and Analysis (continued) In-Class Exercises (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to prepare In-Class Exercises • Additional readings will be uploaded to Canvas to support Written Assignment #1.
6 (Feb 8)	Rule Driven Legal Writing: Preparing an Office Memo	Written Assignment #1 (Office Memo)
7 (Feb 15)	Office Memo Feedback Preparing a Client Advice Letter and Samples Written Assignment #2 Background and In-Class Exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readings will be uploaded to Canvas to support Written Assignment #2
8 (Feb 22)	In-Class Exercises (continued) Preparing a Demand Letter (Introduction)	Written Assignment #2 (Client Advice Letter)
9 (Mar 1)	Client Advice Letter Feedback Preparing a Demand Letter (Continued) Assignment #3 (In-Class) - Demand Letter Drafting	Written Assignment #3 (In-Class Demand Letter Draft) and Self-Assessment
10 (Mar 8)	Demand Letter Feedback Course Review/Q&A	Prepare for Final Exam
Tuesday, 3/15 7 pm – 10 pm	Online Final Exam (materials will be distributed on Monday, 3/14), and your response is to be submitted online by Tuesday, 3/15 at 10 pm<td></td>	

Grading

- Written Exercises 3 exercises x 25% each = 75% of course grade
- Final Exam 25% of course grade

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be subject to disciplinary action consistent with University rules and regulations. A non-exhaustive list of behaviors that violate standards of academic integrity includes: cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, obtaining an unfair advantage, aiding and abetting dishonesty, falsification of records and official documents, and unauthorized access to computerized academic or administrative records or systems. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with University regulations regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Information about UCSD's academic integrity policies can be found at:

<https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/>.

You are strongly encouraged to take issues of academic integrity seriously. Violations can end up on your academic record and may become a red flag for employers and graduate schools.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

All necessary accommodations will be made for students with disabilities. Students requesting accommodations due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (<https://osd.ucsd.edu/>). Students are required to discuss accommodation arrangements with instructors and OSD liaisons in the department well in advance of any exams or assignments. The OSD Liaison for the Political Science department is Joanna Peralta; please connect with her via the Virtual Advising Center as soon as possible.

Academic Advising

During office hours, I am happy to answer questions about this course or provide general career guidance. Students who have questions pertaining to Political Science academic advising are asked to reach out the Department's Undergraduate Advisor, Natalie Ikker, who can be reached via the Virtual Advising Center. Academic advising questions often include (but not limited to): add/drop deadlines, course enrollment policies, planning major and minor requirements, quarter-by-quarter plans, department petitions and paperwork, and referrals to campus and student support services.

Inclusive Classroom Statement

The TAs and I are fully committed to creating a learning environment that supports diversity of thought, perspectives, experiences, and identities. We urge each of you to contribute your unique perspectives to discussions of course questions, themes, and materials so that we can learn from them, and from each other. If you should ever feel excluded, or unable to fully participate in class for any reason, please let me know during office hours, by email, or through any anonymous manner.