Course Description: This seminar has two basic purposes: to introduce graduate students to the literature in judicial process and behavior and to explore a series of particular topics, with emphasis on the major controversies within the broader subfield of law, courts, and judicial processes.

Readings. Most readings come from political science journals. I will post the articles on Blackboard. Alternatively, most articles are available online.

Learning Outcomes: As a result of completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and explain the functioning of the legal system
2. Evaluate and discuss critically judicial behavior and process
3. Develop and implement a research design

Grades: I will base your grade on seminar participation (10%), two short critical essays (10% each), and a research paper (70%).

Since the success of any seminar depends on the participation of its members, your attendance and involvement in the class is essential. Part of your involvement will be to facilitate two class sessions during the semester. This means, more specifically, that you will prepare discussion questions for those class sessions and help lead the discussion of the readings. These questions should be given to me no later than 12:00 noon on the day of the class.

You will also be required to write two one-to-two page essays critically assessing a specific area of the literature. These essays should address issues like the contribution of one or more readings to the literature, the theoretical development of the reading, whether the methodology employed is appropriate to answering the question addressed in the reading. You may focus on one or more of the readings. You may wish to utilize other articles to evaluate some facet of the required material. These essays must be received in class on the day that we discuss the readings in question.

Finally, you will write a research paper on a judicial politics topic of your choice. I believe that it is important for graduate students, especially doctoral students, to be able to conduct original research. This paper assignment is required in order to allow you to
further develop your experience in research. As such, I expect you to write a paper that could be presented at a professional conference. We will discuss this assignment in more detail later this semester. However, there are a few deadlines that you should keep in mind: A paper proposal, describing your question, the basic hypotheses, and the evidence that you intend to use, is due on October 2; the paper will be due on December 11 (two weeks after the last class).

**University Policies:**

Religious Holidays
1. Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance;
2. Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations;
3. Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities.

Academic Integrity
I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html

Support for Students Outside the Classroom
Disability Support Services (DSS)
Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/

University Counseling Center (UCC) 202-994-5300
The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students’ personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:
- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
- confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals

http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices

Security
In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.
Course Outline/Readings: I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus as the semester progresses.

Introduction to the Course (August 28)

Theories of Decision Making (September 4)


Attitudinal Model (September 11)


Preferences (September 18)


Blake, William. N.d. “God Save This Honorable Court: Religion as a Source of Judicial Policy Preferences.” *Political Research Quarterly* Forthcoming.

**Judicial Selection – Federal Courts** (September 25)


**Judicial Selection – State Courts** (October 2)


**Agenda-Setting** (October 9)


**The Law** (October 16)


**Leadership** (October 23)


**The Collegial Game** (October 30)


**The Separation of Powers Game** (November 6)


Public Opinion (November 13)


Interest Groups, Lawyers, & Parties (November 20)


**Implementation** (November 27)


