

**Constitutional Law—Civil Rights
Course Syllabus: Shortened Version
Loyola University Chicago
Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
June 30 to July 18, 2008**

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course focuses on the study and enforcement of civil rights by studying the Constitution and the federal statute that allows citizens to sue those officials who violate their constitutional rights. In addition, the course will offer students an opportunity to hone their critical thinking and communication skills by allowing them to try a civil rights action using the rules that real attorneys use in preparing and trying cases. We will explore the following subjects in this course: the Bill of Rights, the Civil War Amendments to the Constitution, 42 U.S.C. 1983 and related statutes; and the federal rules of evidence.

This course will be a mixture of lecture, class discussion, and hands-on work in preparing for the trial. On occasion, I will use the "Socratic method" to give students thinking about going to law school an opportunity to experience that method of teaching. The course will be reading intensive, and students will be expected to be able to discuss the facts and reasoning they read about in the cases when called upon to do so. Upon completion of this course, students should:

1. Understand the various ways that justices and scholars interpret the constitution;
2. Understand how the Supreme Court approaches civil rights actions;
3. Be able to think systematically and analytically about civil rights and their enforcement;
4. Understand how the rules of evidence and civil procedure shape and structure the American trial process;
5. Be able to compete in college mock trial competition.

Required Texts: (*subject to change*)

- Stephens, Jr., Otis H. and John M. Scheb. *American Constitutional Law*. Current Edition. West/Wadsworth
- Vile, John R. *Pleasing the Court: A Mock Trial Handbook*. 3rd Edition. 2005. Houghton Mifflin Company
- 2006-2007 American Mock Trial Case Materials
- Cases and materials on 42 U.S.C. 1983 (Instructor will prepare packet)

Exams:

There will be two in-class examinations covering the material on the constitution and civil rights actions. The mid-term will be a take-home examination. The final examination will take place on the final day of the course.

Grading:

Grades will be based on examinations, trial preparation and performance, and class participation.

Attendance:

Mandatory.

Trial and Preparation:

Each student will be required to participate in the trial of a civil rights action by taking on the roles of a witness and lawyer. More specific information regarding this assignment will be provided in class. Toward the end of the semester, all students will participate in the trial of the case.