

Supreme Court- 2010-2011

Mr. Edwards

Course Description

Through this course, you will broaden and deepen your understanding of the United States Supreme Court. Why and how does the Court influence life in the United States? What role does it play in defining our national identity? How is it that the court that hears the least number of cases has some of the most far reaching influences? Through the study of cases and controversies, we'll explore the Supreme Court's history, jurisdiction, basic functions, and decisions of particular importance. This course will include an on-going, open exchange of compelling ideas.

General Course Goals and Objectives

In general, the students will:

- Understand the importance of the Supreme Court in our society.
- Analyze and evaluate the Supreme Court's connections to the Constitution
- Analyze and evaluate different viewpoints.

Course of Study

Our study of the court will include:

- Court Procedures
- Court History
- The Court's relationship with the other branches of government and the states

In addition, we'll explore the influence of the Court in the areas of:

- Federalism
- Equal protection of the law
- Judicial review
- Due process
- The Commerce Clause
- The Necessary and Proper Clause
- First Amendment issues

Benchmarks & Performance Standards

Students completing the Supreme Court course will:

- Explain the political origins and evolution of the fundamental principles and values of American liberal democracy. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12)

- Evaluate and take positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured. (Standards: 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 12)
- Analyze the roles and responsibilities of the three branches of the national government and how conflicts between the branches are resolved. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12)
- Describe and evaluate the expansion of federal civil rights legislation and federal protection of civil liberties. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12)
- Describe and evaluate the major political groups and the impact they have on American political culture and behavior. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10)
- Analyze the ways in which citizens interact with and participate in government and its related political groups. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10)
- Identify and describe current political, social, and economic issues facing American society. (Standards: 1, 2, 5, 8)
- Identify and evaluate the means by which public policy is created at the national level. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 8, 12)
- Improve ability to analyze and synthesize visual stimuli, especially graphs, tables and political cartoons. (Standards: 1, 8)
- Improve oral communication ability through asking and answering analytic questions, participating in thoughtful discussion and giving informal presentations. (Standards: 2, 5)
- Identify and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of a federal system of government. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 12)

Resources

Gideon's Trumpet (Vintage), by Anthony Lewis (1988)

Our "text" will include journal and magazine articles, newspaper articles, Supreme Court opinions, and court briefs. In addition, the following websites will be particularly helpful:

www.supremecourt.gov

This site includes Supreme Court opinions and briefs, Court schedules, and oral argument transcripts and recordings.

www.oyez.org

This site also includes news links as well as oral argument transcripts and recordings.

www.scotusblog.com

This is a helpful link to Supreme Court news updates and analysis of issues currently before the Court.

www.jurist.law.pitt.edu/supremecourt.htm

This site offers useful links to mainstream media articles about the Supreme Court.

Attendance

The attendance and tardy policies will be followed as written in the student handbook.

Grading

- Participation in a variety of activities including tests, discussions, Socratic seminars, group projects, individual and group presentations, and simulation exercises, will be graded.
- Building a strong vocabulary in this area is critical to success in this course. To that end, you will engage in a variety of vocabulary building activities.
- Sharing your thoughts during class discussions and other group activities is one important key to success in this course.

Please note: No late work will be accepted (with the usual, reasonable exceptions).

Final Thoughts

During this course, I will encourage you to use the Supreme Court as our model of civility and clear thinking. The justices of the Court represent some of our best thinkers; they respectfully argue and debate some of our most critical issues; they make and explain decisions that can have far reaching influences for years to come. In the tradition of the Court, we will practice civil discourse when discussing issues about which you might have strong disagreements, and we will practice making well-informed arguments in clear, articulate ways