

Lecture Course on
Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Texts (available at Columbia University Bookstore):

- Hobbs, *The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace*
- Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*
- Tirado, *Hand to Mouth: Living in Bootstrap America*
- Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality*
- Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi*
- Riley, *Please Stop Helping Us*
- Dow, *Autobiography of an Execution*
- Lewis, *Freedom for the Thought That We Hate*
- Pollitt, *Pro*
- Yoshino, *Speak Now*
- Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*
- Turow, *Ultimate Punishment*
- Sunstein, *The Second Bill of Rights*
- Kristof, WuDunn, *A Path Appears*
- Recommended: Franzese, *A Short and Happy Guide to Being a College Student*

Prerequisites: POLS BC1001 “Dynamics of American Politics” or POLS W1201 “Introduction to American Government & Politics” or equivalent. This course has a limited enrollment of 30 students.

Course Description: This course explores seminal case law to inform contemporary civil rights and civil liberties jurisprudence and policy. Specifically, the readings examine historical and contemporary first amendment values, including freedom of speech and the press, discrimination, affirmative action, the right to privacy, reproductive freedom, criminal procedure and adjudication, the rights of the criminally accused and the death penalty.

Requirements: Students are required to attend all classes. This class is conducted much like a law school seminar, and students are required to actively participate. Class participation counts for 20% of the final grade, the take-home midterm for 40% and the take-home final for 40%.

Learning Objectives: This course will provide students with a working knowledge of the legal method of inquiry, as it pertains to matters of constitutional interpretation and adjudication. Civil rights and civil liberties will be assessed in their legal context. Specifically, students will learn to:

1. Read and analyze judicial opinions.

2. Identify the various constitutional standards of judicial review.
3. Apply legal and analytical constructs.
4. Evaluate the merits and shortcomings of the major theoretical debates within the civil liberties discourse, both in oral and written presentations.
5. Analyze and assess contemporary scholarly and journalistic writings on civil rights and civil liberties by critically examining their claims and applicable counterpoints.

Grading: Grades will be calculated as follows:

Class participation: 20%

Take-Home Midterm: 40%

Take-Home Final Exam: 40%

Topics and Readings Schedule

Week One

Overview of the judicial system and court organization; introduction to key concepts of judicial review and theories of constitutional interpretation; how to read and brief a case.

Week Two

Race and Identity

Hobbs, *The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace*

In a one to two page reflection, please discuss the core civil rights and civil liberties themes raised by this biography and which of those matter most to you.

Week Three

Race Discrimination

Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*

Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi*

Week Four

Riley, *Please Stop Helping Us*

Week Five

Economic Inequality

Stiglitz, *The Cost of Inequality*

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED

Week Six

The Intersection of Race, Class, Culture and Identity

Tirado, *Hand to Mouth: Living in Bootstrap America*

Week Seven

First Amendment Values
Lewis, *Freedom for the Thought that We Hate*
TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE

Week Eight
The Right to Privacy
Pollitt, *Pro*

Week Nine
Marriage Equality
Yoshino, *Speak Now*

Week Ten
The Rights of the Criminally Accused
Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*

Week Eleven
The Death Penalty
Turow, *Ultimate Punishment*
Dow, *Autobiography of an Execution*

Week Twelve
Sunstein, *The Second Bill of Rights*

Week Thirteen
Kristof, WuDunn, *A Path Appears*
TAKE-HOME FINAL DISTRIBUTED