

Lecture Course on
Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Texts (available at Columbia University Bookstore):

- Tirado, *Hand to Mouth: Living in Bootstrap America*
- Isenberg, *White Trash: The Four-Hundred Year Untold Story of Class in America*
- West, *Shrill: Notes from a Loud Woman*
- Coates, *Between the World and Me*
- Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi*
- Dyson, *The Black Presidency: Barack Obama and the Politics of Race in America*
- Stevenson, *Just Mercy*
- Timothy Garton Ash, *Free Speech: Ten Principles for a Connected World*
- Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: Mass Incarceration in America*
- 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*
- 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.

Course Description: This course explores seminal law and policy to inform contemporary civil rights and civil liberties jurisprudence. Specifically, the readings examine discrimination, class, freedom of speech and the press, 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. 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.

Week Two

Ash, *Free Speech*, assigned chapters

Are free speech rights absolute? How does social media affect the marketplace of ideas? For better or for worse?

Week Three

Race Discrimination

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

Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi*, assigned chapters

Week Four

Race and Identity

Coates, *Between the World and Me*

Dyson, *The Black Presidency*, assigned chapters

Imagine Coates, Dyson, Tatum and Steele in conversation. What would that exchange sound like with respect to race in America?

Week Five

Mass Incarceration

Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*, assigned chapters

How do the earlier readings inform Hinton's thesis?

Week Six

Economic Inequality

Isenberg, *White Trash*, assigned chapters

What surprised you most about Isenberg's account?

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED

Week Seven

The Intersection of Race, Class, Culture and Identity

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

Did this book change any of your perceptions? How so?

Week Eight

Impediments to gender-based equality

West, *Shrill: Notes from a Loud Woman*

MIDTERM DUE

Week Nine

The Right to Privacy

Pollitt, *Pro*

What is the counter-argument to Pollitt's thesis?

Week Ten

Marriage Equality

Yoshino, *Speak Now*

Contrast the strides made here with those made (or not achieved) in the pursuit of racial equality. Why?

Week Eleven

The Death Penalty

Turow, *Ultimate Punishment*

Dow, *Autobiography of an Execution*, assigned chapters

What mattered most to you in these two accounts? Why?

Week Twelve

The Rights of the Criminally Accused

Stevenson, *Just Mercy*

What would a persuasive argument in support of the death penalty rely on? How so?

Week Thirteen

Sunstein, *The Second Bill of Rights*

Think about what your second bill of rights would be, as informed by this semester's readings.

TAKE-HOME FINAL DISTRIBUTED