

Supreme Court Seminar
Fall 2017
University of Iowa College of Law
Professor Todd Pettys (Room 472, 335-6814, todd-pettys@uiowa.edu)
Administrative Assistant: Melanie Stutzman (Room 433, 335-9055)
Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00

Required Materials

You will find all of the required course materials on the “Courses” page of my website, www.todd-pettys.com.

Office Hours

In addition to teaching this course, I teach on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays from 10:20-11:20. On those days, the best times to speak with me will be in the afternoon. On Thursdays and Fridays, please come see me whenever you would like. I also am happy to make appointments for those who want to be guaranteed that I will be in my office and available to talk at a particular time.

Attendance and Participation

During each of our class sessions, you and your classmates will be discussing cases on which each of you, as individual justices, will be required to vote. You also will be discussing your and your colleagues’ drafts of opinions. As a result, attendance at each class session is essential and non-negotiable. If you foresee any conflicts on your calendar, please make alternative arrangements now so that you will be able to join us each time we meet throughout the semester. (If you have unavoidable conflicts, please drop the course immediately so that we can bring in someone from the waiting list.) Because each student’s attendance and participation are essential, each student must arrive for class on time.

Grading

One-fourth of each student’s grade will be based on the quality of his or her first draft, one-fourth will be based on the quality of his or her second draft, one-fourth will be based on the quality of his or her final draft, and one-fourth will be based on his or her contributions to our weekly discussions and his or her timeliness in meeting the deadlines described in this syllabus. Failure to attend all or a substantial part of any class session will result in a 1.5-point grade reduction in the student’s final course grade (e.g., a student who otherwise would have received a 4.0 would receive a 2.5). Failure to attend all or a substantial part of a second class session will result in a failing final course grade.

Course Overview

In this course, you will be adjudicating nine cases that are pending this fall before either the United States Supreme Court or the Iowa Supreme Court (predominantly—if

not entirely—the former, though the latter might make an appearance). You will be reading the briefs, researching the law, debating the merits, and writing opinions that reflect how you believe those cases should be decided.

As you will see on the schedule below, we will divide the nine cases into groups of three (“Set One,” “Set Two,” and “Set Three”) for purposes of discussing the cases’ merits and circulating drafts of opinions. Each student will write one opinion.

There are two websites that you might find particularly useful. The first is <http://www.scotusblog.com/>. That website gathers all of the briefs filed in the U.S. Supreme Court’s cases (the original petitions for and against certiorari, the parties’ briefs on the merits, and the amicus briefs). SCOTUSblog also provides commentary about many of the Court’s pending cases. The second website you might want to visit is <http://www.supremecourtus.gov/> (the Supreme Court’s own website), which contains information about the Court.

If we take up any cases pending before the Iowa Supreme Court, you may want to visit [http://www.iowacourts.gov/About the Courts/Supreme Court/](http://www.iowacourts.gov/About_the_Courts/Supreme_Court/), which (among other things) contains video recordings of oral arguments, as well as a few other resources. The leading blog covering the Iowa Supreme Court is <https://www.iowaappeals.com/>.

Schedule and Assignments

As you will see below, there are designated Tuesdays throughout the semester when you will be required to submit drafts of your opinions via email. On those Tuesdays, you will be emailing your drafts to me *and* to all of the other students in the class, so that the entire group will have a sufficient period of time to read the drafts and to prepare to discuss them at the following week’s class session. As you also will see, the deadlines are set for 11:00 p.m. on the designated Tuesdays. Those 11:00 p.m. deadlines are mandatory. They are inflexible. They are written in stone. They are not to be missed.

When completing the writing assignments, please adhere to the rules of citation spelled out in *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation*. We will be following the conventions for practitioners’ documents, which you will find on the blue-shaded pages that appear at the beginning of the book.

Please prepare your drafts in Word, using 12-point Times New Roman font. Also, to facilitate group discussion of your drafts’ contents, *please number your pages*.

Week One

August 22: Discuss and cast votes for Set One.

Week Two

August 29: Discuss and cast votes for Set Two.

Week Three

September 5: Discuss and cast votes for Set Three.

Week Four

September 12: Class discussion; no preparation required.

Week Five

September 19: No class today. No later than 11:00 p.m., distribute via email all opinions for Set One.

Week Six

September 26: Discuss all opinions for Set One. No later than 11:00 p.m., distribute via email all opinions for Set Two.

Week Seven

October 3: Discuss all opinions for Set Two. No later than 11:00 p.m., distribute via email all opinions for Set Three.

Week Eight

October 10: Discuss all opinions for Set Three.

Week Nine

October 17: No class today. No later than 11:00 p.m., distribute via email all revised opinions for Set One.

Week Ten

October 24: Discuss all revised opinions for Set One. No later than 11:00 p.m., distribute via email all revised opinions for Set Two.

Week Eleven

October 31: Discuss all revised opinions for Set Two. No later than 11:00 p.m., distribute via email all revised opinions for Set Three.

Week Twelve

November 7: Discuss all revised opinions for Set Three.

Week Thirteen

November 14: No class today.

Week Fourteen

November 21: No class today. Happy Thanksgiving!

Week Fifteen

November 28: No class today. No later than **4:00 p.m.**—**note the earlier time of day!**—distribute via email *all final opinions* for Sets One, Two, and Three. The finish line has arrived!