

Supreme Court Seminar
Fall 2019
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, 3:30-5:30

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 11:10-12:10. On those days, the best times to speak with me will be after lunch. 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 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. 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 one or more unavoidable conflicts, please drop the course now.) 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 the quality of his or her contributions to our weekly discussions and his or her timeliness in meeting the deadlines described in this syllabus. Failure to attend a substantial part of any class session will result in a 1.0-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 3.0). Failure to attend a substantial part of a second class session will result in a failing final course grade. I will use my discretion based on the circumstances to determine what counts as “substantial.”

Course Overview and Learning Objectives

In this course, you will study nine cases that are pending before either the United States Supreme Court or the Iowa Supreme Court. 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. My chief learning objectives for you this semester are that, by the end of the semester, you will be able to produce a professional-quality judicial opinion, offer insightful feedback on other students' drafts of judicial opinions, and be able to discuss your disagreements with one another in a professional manner.

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 several 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 is <http://www.supremecourtus.gov/>, which contains information about the Court. The third and fourth (which will become relevant only if we do cases pending before the Iowa Supreme Court) are [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, and <https://www.iowaappeals.com/>, which is a blog covering the Iowa Supreme Court.

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 written in stone. They are not to be missed.

When completing the writing assignments, please adhere to the rules of citation described in *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation*.

Please prepare your drafts in Word, using 12-point Times New Roman font and double spacing the lines. Also, to facilitate group discussion of your drafts' contents, *please number your pages*.

Week One

August 27: Discuss and cast votes for Set One.

Week Two

September 3: Discuss and cast votes for Set Two.

Week Three

September 10: Discuss and cast votes for Set Three.

Week Four

September 17: Class discussion; no preparation required.

Week Five

September 24: No class today. No later than 11:00 p.m., distribute via email all opinions for Set One, being sure to include me and all of your eight colleagues.

Week Six

October 1: Discuss all opinions for Set One. No later than 11:00 p.m., distribute via email all opinions for Set Two, being sure to include me and all of your eight colleagues.

Week Seven

October 8: Discuss all opinions for Set Two. No later than 11:00 p.m., distribute via email all opinions for Set Three, being sure to include me and all of your eight colleagues.

Week Eight

October 15: Discuss all opinions for Set Three.

Week Nine

October 22: No class today. No later than 11:00 p.m., distribute via email all revised opinions for Set One, being sure to include me and all of your eight colleagues.

Week Ten

October 29: Discuss all revised opinions for Set One. No later than 11:00 p.m., distribute via email all revised opinions for Set Two, being sure to include me and all of your eight colleagues.

Week Eleven

November 5: Discuss all revised opinions for Set Two. No later than 11:00 p.m., distribute via email all revised opinions for Set Three, being sure to include me and all of your eight colleagues.

Week Twelve

November 12: Discuss all revised opinions for Set Three.

Week Thirteen

November 19: No class today.

Week Fourteen

November 26: No class today. Happy Thanksgiving!

Week Fifteen

December 3: 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, being sure to include me and all of your eight colleagues. Congratulations on finishing!