

**Supreme Court Seminar
Fall 2024
University of Iowa College of Law
Professor Todd Pettys (Room 472, 319-335-6814, todd-pettys@uiowa.edu)
Administrative Assistant: Melanie Stutzman (Room 433, 319-335-9055)
Tuesdays, 2:00-3:40, Room 265**

Required Materials

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

Office Hours

My office hours will be from 11:10-Noon on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. (I teach until 11:05 on those days and so will arrive a few minutes late if students in that course ask me questions at the end of our class sessions.) In addition to those times, you are free to come to my office any time you’d like. If you stop by once and I’m not there, please just let me know you’re looking for me and we’ll quickly set something up.

Attendance and Participation

During each of our class sessions, you will be playing the roles of individual justices, voting on cases and discussing your and your colleagues’ drafts of opinions. As a result, you must arrive for each class session on time, and attendance at each class session is mandatory, without exceptions. 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—unfortunately, we will need to bring in a person from the wait list to replace you. Because attendance and active participation are required due to our course design, I will not be recording our class sessions.

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 feedback on colleagues’ drafts, 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 disenrollment from the course. 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 the United States Supreme Court. You will read the primary briefs, research the law, debate the merits, and write 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, respond constructively to critiques of your work, offer insightful feedback on other students' drafts, and discuss your disagreements with one another in a productive and 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 two websites that you might find especially useful. The first is <http://www.scotusblog.com/>. That website gathers all the briefs filed in the U.S. Supreme Court's cases (the 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. If you click on "Case Documents" and then "Docket Search," there is a box where you can type the docket number of any case of interest and obtain all the filings for it.

Document Format

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

Providing Oral and Written Feedback

Throughout the semester, you will be providing one another with both oral and written feedback on drafts. The oral feedback will come during our class sessions. For the written feedback, you must separately email your comments to each author at least two hours prior to the start of the class sessions in which we are scheduled to discuss their drafts. Those comments can appear in the form of comments inserted in the draft itself using Word's "comment" feature or in the form of an email summarizing your suggestions for improvement. No matter how you choose to provide your feedback, ***you must CC me when you email it to the authors***. Do not email your comments to the entire class—just to me and to the author of the draft you are critiquing.

Uses of Artificial Intelligence

You are not permitted to use artificial-intelligence tools for any part of your drafting and editing work in this course.

Disability Accommodations

Please contact Dean Carin Crain directly for disability accommodation requests: carin-crain@uiowa.edu or 319-335-9648.

Mental Health

Students are encouraged to be mindful of their mental health and seek help as a preventive measure if struggling to meet course expectations. Students are encouraged to talk to me for assistance with specific class-related concerns. For additional support and counseling, students are encouraged to contact University Counseling Service (UCS). Information about UCS, including resources and how to schedule an appointment, can be found at counseling.uiowa.edu. Find out more about UI mental health services at: mentalhealth.uiowa.edu.

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, as well as provide feedback on other authors' work. On those Tuesdays, *you will be emailing your drafts to me and to all the other students in the class*, so that the entire group will have sufficient time to read the drafts and prepare to discuss them at the following week's class session. With just one noted exception, those Tuesday deadlines are set for Noon and 10:00 p.m. Those Noon and 10:00 p.m. deadlines are mandatory. They are written in stone. Do not miss them. (Years ago, Virginia was allowed to execute Roger Coleman after disregarding his petition for habeas relief because he'd filed the petition one day late. Far less consequentially, U.S. gymnast Jordan Chiles was stripped of her 2024 bronze medal because she was four seconds late in filing the challenge that had led to her bronze-medal-winning score. For better or worse, deadlines matter—especially in the legal profession—and so in this course we will make it a practice to honor them.)

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 about opinion-writing; no preparation required.

Week Five

September 24: No class today. No later than 10:00 p.m., distribute via email all opinions for Set One, being sure to include me and your eight colleagues.

Week Six

October 1: Discuss all opinions for Set One. No later than two hours prior to class—i.e., by Noon—email your written feedback to each Set One author, being sure to CC me (Pettys) on the email. No later than 10:00 p.m., distribute via email all opinions for Set Two, being sure to include me and your eight colleagues.

Week Seven

October 8: Discuss all opinions for Set Two. No later than two hours prior to class—i.e., by Noon—email your written feedback to each Set Two author, being sure to CC me (Pettys) on the email. No later than 10:00 p.m., distribute via email all opinions for Set Three, being sure to include me and all your eight colleagues.

Week Eight

October 15: Discuss all opinions for Set Three. No later than two hours prior to class—i.e., by Noon—email your written feedback to each Set Three author, being sure to CC me (Pettys) on the email.

Week Nine

October 22: No class today. No later than 10:00 p.m., distribute via email all revised opinions for Set One, being sure to include me and your eight colleagues.

Week Ten

October 29: Discuss all revised opinions for Set One. No later than two hours prior to class—i.e., by Noon—email your written feedback to each Set One author, being sure to CC me (Pettys) on the email. No later than 10:00 p.m., distribute via email all revised opinions for Set Two, being sure to include me and your eight colleagues.

Week Eleven

November 5: Discuss all revised opinions for Set Two. No later than two hours prior to class—i.e., by Noon—email your written feedback to each Set Two author, being sure to CC me (Pettys) on the email. No later than 10:00 p.m., distribute via email all revised opinions for Set Three, being sure to include me and your eight colleagues.

Week Twelve

November 12: Discuss all revised opinions for Set Three. No later than two hours prior to class—i.e., by Noon—email your written feedback to each Set Three author, being sure to CC me (Pettys) on the email.

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!**—distribute via email *all final opinions* for Sets One, Two, and Three, being sure to include me and your eight colleagues. Congratulations on finishing!

Syllabi Contents Mandated by the University of Iowa¹

Free Speech and Expression

The University of Iowa supports and upholds the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech and the principles of academic and artistic freedom. We are committed to open inquiry, vigorous debate, and creative expression inside and outside of the classroom. Visit the [Free Speech at Iowa website](#) for more information on the university's policies on free speech and academic freedom.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The university is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. If a student has a diagnosed disability or other disabling condition that may impact the student's ability to complete the course requirements as stated in the syllabus, the student may seek accommodations through [Student Disability Services](#) (SDS). SDS is responsible for making Letters of Accommodation (LOA) available to the student. The student must provide a LOA to the instructor as early in the semester as possible, but requests not made at least two weeks prior to the scheduled activity for which an accommodation is sought may not be accommodated. The LOA will specify what reasonable course accommodations the student is eligible for and those the instructor should provide. Additional information can be found on the [SDS website](#).

Absences for Religious Holy Days

The university is prepared to make reasonable accommodations for students whose religious holy days coincide with their classroom assignments, test schedules, and classroom attendance expectations. Students must notify their instructors in writing of any such Religious Holy Day conflicts or absences within the first few days of the

¹ <https://provost.uiowa.edu/course-syllabi-information>.

semester or session, and no later than the third week of the semester. If the conflict or absence will occur within the first three weeks of the semester, the student should notify the instructor as soon as possible. See [Policy Manual 8.2 Absences for Religious Holy Days](#) for additional information.

Non-discrimination Statement

The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination in employment, educational programs, and activities on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth and related conditions), disability, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, service in the U.S. military, sexual orientation, gender identity, or associational preferences. The university also affirms its commitment to providing equal opportunities and equal access to university facilities. For additional information on nondiscrimination policies, contact the Senior Director, [Office of Civil Rights Compliance](#), the University of Iowa, 202 Jessup Hall, Iowa City, IA 52242-1316, 319-335-0705, daod-ocrc@uiowa.edu. Although not required, students have the option to share their pronouns and chosen/preferred names in class and through [MyUI](#). Instructors and advisors can find information about a student's chosen/preferred name in MyUI.