COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Students taking this course will learn about all facets of the American Legal System and by the end of this semester will have an understanding of basic legal theories, judicial decision-making, the structure of both the federal and state court systems, appellate review, and implementation and impact of judicial policies. Students will have opportunities to interpret all of these elements of the American legal system through the lens of HBO’s The Wire Season One.

COURSE GOALS:

By the end of this course you should be able to identify the various debates and controversies associated with the American legal system. Specifically, students will be able to accurately describe the nature of the following controversies relating to the American legal system:

- The debate over substantive and procedural justice
- The debate over whether the “haves” possess certain advantages in the legal system in comparison to “have-nots”
- The debate over whether there is a litigation problem that is unique to the United States
- The debate over which theories of judicial decision-making have most support.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students in this class will:

- Learn to communicate ideas clearly and effectively in written form.
- Learn to produce work in accordance with the highest standards of academic integrity.
- Learn the diverse perspectives of others as course concepts are applied to HBO’s The Wire.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:


TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:

Computer access to the internet is required in order to successfully navigate this course. Firefox is the recommended browser for Sakai compatibility and can be downloaded free from www.mozilla.com/firefox. You will require additional plug-ins (Adobe Reader, Adobe Flash,
Real Player, Quicktime). These are all free downloads. Internet Explorer for Windows, version 6 or higher is also an option. Be sure to turn off pop-up blocker.

SAKAI HELP:

Here is the link for Sakai help: https://sakai.uri.edu/portal/help/main.

In the Sakai menu on the left you will see Sakai Documentation at the bottom of the menu. If you click on it, it will take you to the help pages. You can also call the Help Desk at 401-874-4357.

Remember to use Firefox as your browser as there have been compatibility issues with Internet Explorer and Safari. Firefox works on both PC and Mac platforms.

CLASSROOM PROTOCOL:

For this online course, Sakai is our “classroom.” Please refer to the Sakai tutorial video embedded on our course homepage (START HERE) for a detailed screencast on how this course will run via Sakai, which tools you will need, and how to use those tools.

In the online learning environment, “attendance” is measured by your PRESENCE in the site as well as your CONTRIBUTIONS to the site. The importance of regular log-ins and active participation cannot be overstated. I will gauge your participation by your regular, on-time forum postings and responses, and timely assignment submissions. If you’ve never taken an online course, “hanging out” on Sakai will take some getting used to, and it will be easy to forget about the course from time to time. I recommend that you check out the Online Learn Orientation at https://sakai.uri.edu/portal/site/8287ab7d-aa33-4fa7-ad8c-066fe8203251. This short orientation will provide you with an introduction to the important aspects of taking an online course. I further recommend that you get in the habit of daily attendance online to maximize your successful completion of the course. Please refer to the Schedule of Readings, Assignments, Quizzes, Exams at the end of this syllabus and on the Sakai site for details on how and when you will be expected to contribute to the course.

ONLINE LEARNING:

As stated above, the best way to begin this course is to view the START HERE video, read the syllabus, and complete the Online Learn Orientation. In addition, you can find more helpful information at this site: http://web.uri.edu/online/learningonline/. Finally, the syllabus is your map to this course.

This course is divided into seven weeks with two Lessons per week. Each Lesson on Sakai contains the learning objectives for that lesson, assigned readings, videos, and links to other important content on the internet, written assignments, quizzes, and discussion activities.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING POLICY

You will have an opportunity to earn a total of 380 points for this course.

1. Midterm Exam – 100 points.
2. Final Exam – 100 points.
3. Quizzes – 60 points.
5. Forum Posts – 120 points.

EVALUATION METHODS:

Exams: During the course of this session I will schedule an exam window during which you can take a midterm and a final exam. These exams will include multiple choice questions and essays.

Quizzes: Each “Lesson” in Sakai will be followed by a ten point quiz that covers the reading material.

Blog Posts: After each episode of The Wire you will be asked to write a 200 word blog post about your reaction to the episode and how the week’s readings relate to it. As part of this assignment, you will also be asked to comment on two other blog posts that are submitted by your peers. A rubric will be provided to students that explains how the blog posts will be evaluated.

Forum Posts: After each lesson students will find a discussion forum that is designed to help students identify the most important parts of the reading. A rubric will be provided that explains how forum posts will be evaluated.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS:

Blogging The Wire, Season 1: This summer you will be applying the concepts from the book to the HBO TV Series, The Wire Season 1. You will be asked to write a Sakai blog post after having watched a set of three episodes. I will be assessing your blog post for your ability to insightfully identify how key concepts from that week’s corresponding textbook reading play out in each set of three episodes. Your blog post should be well-written, insightful, creative, and at least 200 words. Your blog posts are due on Sundays by midnight.

Forum Posts: The forum posts are designed to help you identify the most important parts of the Baum readings, as well as the various handouts that are provided to you in this course. For each lesson you will see that a forum discussion activity is associated with it. Forum posts are also due on Sundays by midnight.

ASSIGNMENTS/QUIZZES/EXAMS NOT SUBMITTED BY THE DEADLINE WILL RECEIVE TEN PERCENT OFF FOR EACH DAY LATE. Please back up your work on a flash drive, email to yourself, and/or store in a cloud. It is a good idea to have a back-up plan in case of computer problems, e.g., a friend’s computer, a library computer, etc.

GRADING SCALE:

A 100-94  A- 93-90
B+ 89-86  B 85-83  B- 82-80
C+ 79-76  C 75-73  C- 72-70
D+ 69-67  D 66-60  F 59 and Below
ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Office of Disability Services

1. Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me early in the semester so that we may work out reasonable accommodations to support your success in this course. Students should also contact Disability Services for Students, Office of Student Life, 330 Memorial Union, 401-874-2098.

2. From the University Manual: 6.40.10 and 6.40.11 Accommodations for Qualified Students With Disabilities.

   Students are expected to notify faculty at the onset of the semester if any special considerations are required in the classroom. If any special considerations are required for examinations, it is expected the student will notify the faculty a week before the examination with the appropriate paperwork.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offenses, which are dealt with firmly by the College and University. Scholastic integrity presumes that students are honest in all academic work. Cheating is the failure to give credit for work not done independently (i.e., submitting a paper written by someone other than yourself), unauthorized communication during an examination, or the claiming of credit for work not done (i.e., falsifying information). Plagiarism is the failure to give credit for another person’s written or oral statement, thereby falsely presuming that such work is originally and solely your own.

If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, visit the following website: https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/whatisplagiarism, the URI Student Handbook, and University Manual sections on plagiarism and cheating at http://web.uri.edu/studentconduct/student-handbook/.

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. A student’s name on any written work, quiz or exam shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student’s own independent thought and study. Work should be stated in the student’s own words, properly attributed to its source. Students have an obligation to know how to quote, paraphrase, summarize, cite and reference the work of others with integrity. The following are examples of academic dishonesty.

- Using material, directly or paraphrasing, from published sources (print or electronic) without appropriate citation;
- Claiming disproportionate credit for work not done independently;
- Unauthorized possession or access to exams;
- Unauthorized communication during exams;
- Unauthorized use of another’s work or preparing work for another student;
• Taking an exam for another student;
• Altering or attempting to alter grades;
• The use of notes or electronic devices to gain an unauthorized advantage during exams;
• Fabricating or falsifying facts, data or references;
• Facilitating or aiding another’s academic dishonesty;
• Submitting the same paper for more than one course without prior approval from the Instructor.

Please note the following section from the **University Manual**:

8.27.17. Instructors shall have the explicit duty to take action in known cases of cheating or plagiarism. The instructor shall have the right to fail a student on the assignment on which the instructor has determined that a student has cheated or plagiarized. The circumstances of this failure shall be reported to the student’s academic dean, the instructor’s dean, and the Office of Student Life. The student may appeal the matter to the instructor’s dean, and the decision by the dean shall be expeditious and final. Such action will be initiated by the instructor if it is determined that any written assignment is copied or falsified or inappropriately referenced.

Any good writer’s handbook as well as reputable online resources will offer help on matters of plagiarism and instruct you on how to acknowledge source material. If you need more help understanding when to cite something or how to indicate your references, PLEASE ASK.

**Please note:** Students are responsible for being familiar with and adhering to the published “**Community Standards of Behavior: University Policies and Regulations**” which can be accessed in the **University Student Handbook**.
### Tentative Course Outline

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<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Readings/Videos</th>
<th>Assignment (All Posts Due on Sunday 11:59)</th>
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| Lesson 1: Course Introduction, the Rule of Law, and Substantive/Procedural Justice. | Syllabus  
Altman Handout  
Baum Ch. 1  
The Wire, Episodes 1-3 | Quiz 1  
Forum Post  
Blog Post |
| Lesson 2: The Structure of US Judiciaries and the American Legal Profession | Baum, Chs. 2-3  
Galanter Handout  
The Wire, Episodes 4-6 | Quiz 2  
Forum Post  
Blog Post |
| Lesson 3: Judges and their Role in the Criminal Justice System | Baum, Chs. 5-6  
58 Lonely Men Handout  
The Wire, Episodes 7-9 | Quiz 3  
Forum Post  
Blog Post |
| Lesson 4: The Appellate Court System and the Policy Impact of Courts | Baum, Chs. 8-9  
The Wire, Episodes 10-13 | Quiz 4  
Forum Post  
Blog Post |
| Lesson 5: Adversarial Legalism and the American Political System | Kagan Handout | Quiz 5  
Forum Post  
Blog Post |
| Lesson 6: Tort Litigation in the United States | Haltom and McCann Handout  
McDonald’s Hot Coffee Case Documentary | Quiz 6  
Forum Post  
Blog Post |

### Midterm Exam Window

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Readings/Videos</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Lesson 4: The Appellate Court System and the Policy Impact of Courts | Baum, Chs. 8-9  
The Wire, Episodes 10-13 | Quiz 4  
Forum Post  
Blog Post |
| Lesson 5: Adversarial Legalism and the American Political System | Kagan Handout | Quiz 5  
Forum Post  
Blog Post |
| Lesson 6: Tort Litigation in the United States | Haltom and McCann Handout  
McDonald’s Hot Coffee Case Documentary | Quiz 6  
Forum Post  
Blog Post |

### Final Exam Window