

**San José State University**  
**College of Health and Human Sciences / Justice Studies Department**  
**Justice Studies 103, Courts and Society, Fall 2020**

**Instructor:** Margaret (Peggy) Stevenson  
**Office:** online  
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**Office hours:** Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:30 – 11:30 AM and by arrangement  
Zoom meeting ID **958 8950 6603** passcode **868644**  
**Class Days /Time:** Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:00 – 1:15 PM plus recorded Zoom classes  
Zoom class meeting ID **972 9303 8727** passcode **453917**  
**Prerequisites:** Upper Division standing  
**Competency area:** A – Theories

**Course Description: JS 103**

The catalog description: Structure and functions of the court system. Emphasizes attorneys' and judges' roles and the court process. Examination of federal and state legislative, executive and judicial branch actions, including Supreme Court decisions in civil and criminal cases.

**Course Goals and Course Learning Outcomes**

This class covers the structure and functions of the court system. It focuses on the ways in which courts influence society -- and vice versa -- in the context of civil and criminal cases. The course involves lectures, guest speakers, class participation, court observations and general reflection on justice issues.

By the end of the course, generally you should be familiar with ways in which courts operate in U.S. society and gain ability to reflect on ways they can be improved. More specifically, upon successful completion of this course, you should achieve the following course learning outcomes (CLOs):

CLO 1: Understand the constitutional structure and function of civil and criminal judicial processes from pretrial through litigation and appeal in the United States. Compare the state and federal courts.

CLO 2: Identify and understand the roles played by participants in the United States justice system, including judges, attorneys, parties, witnesses and jurors.

CLO 3: Critically analyze how developments in society can affect court decisions and the impact of court decisions on society.

CLO 4: Read, write, and contribute to discussion with understanding and skill.

**Required Texts/Readings**

There is no textbook. A photocopied 500-page course reader will be available at Maple Press, 330 South 10<sup>th</sup> Street # 200, San Jose (408) 297-1000; approximate cost: \$ 40 (cash or check only).

I will post a PDF version of the course reader on Canvas for those who have free printing and / or are out of town and wish to arrange their own printing at a local shop. I recommend printing hard copy so you can take notes during class.

### **Course website:**

Course materials including the syllabus, readings, class notes, resources and other materials are found on the course website on Canvas. Log in at one.sjsu.edu using your nine digit SJSU student ID number. Your password is the same one you use for your SJSU One account. All your courses will appear once you log in, click on JS 103 for this course.

The course is organized into “Modules.” Click on each Module for the readings for the specific unit.

### **Classroom Protocol**

Students are expected to attend and participate in all classes on-line, complete all reading and writing assignments (text and website), and take assigned quizzes and a final exam. See the Tentative Course Calendar, following, for more detail and due dates. If you have to miss a class, please ask a classmate or check the website if you are missing information.

Check the course website at least once a week for updates. Make sure you are receiving updates from Canvas via email. (If you are not, check the email you have listed on your SJSUOne account and adjust to make sure you get notifications of announcements, schedule changes, guest speakers, etc.)

### **Assignments and Grading Policy**

Grading is based on a point system, as outlined in the following table.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>CLO</b>	<b># per semester</b>	<b>pts for each</b>	<b>total pts</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Courtroom observations	1-4	2	12	24	16
Analysis of news report	1-4	2	8	16	11
Polling during lecture	1-4	10	1	10	7
Quizzes	1-4	2	25	50	33
Final exam	1-4	1	50	50	33
<b>Total</b>	1-4			<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

#### Total points:

Points are posted on the course website. Please check to assure that the points posted accurately reflect the assignments you have turned in. The totals are calculated automatically, but please double-check the accuracy of the calculations. It is your responsibility to assure that you are meeting class requirements.

**Grades are calculated based on a curve based on total points at the end of the semester**, with the percentage of points earned taken into account. There is no set percent of grades in each category. Those who earn 90 percent and above likely will get an A, 80 – 89 percent likely will get a B, 70 – 79 percent likely will get a C, 60 – 69 percent likely will get a D and those below 60 percent likely will get an F. However, at the end of the class I will adjust grades, depending on how the class does as a whole. Additionally, upon occasion I adjust grades upward for consistent, meaningful classroom participation to acknowledge the added value to our educational endeavor.

Written assignments. There are four written assignments due in this class: two reports on an issue related to courts and society in the news and two court observations. A separate memo is posted on the website in the “Course Description” module on the Canvas website regarding the requirements for these written assignments and information about finding courtrooms to observe. Some samples are posted as well.

Please turn in written assignments via email by the end of the day that they are due. Please submit to me via email at [Margaret.stevenson@sjsu.edu](mailto:Margaret.stevenson@sjsu.edu). Do not turn in assignments via Canvas. Keep a copy of all your work in case of loss.

I cannot individually confirm receipt of your assignments. Periodically I will post an announcement on Canvas stating that I believe that I am caught up in grading. At that point, if you have turned in an assignment but not received credit for it on the class website, please send me the document you previously submitted, stating when you turned it in, within one week from the time I post the announcement that I am caught up.

Polling. To help assure that you are keeping up with reading and understanding, I will ask you to participate at 10 random times this semester in “polls.” These will be questions through Zoom (like i-clicker or Piazza) that you answer over your phone or computer. We’ll do our first poll on the first day for practice.

Quizzes and final exam: Quizzes and the final exam are on-line. They are open book, within a limited timeframe, but must be your own, individual work. The format for quizzes and final will be multiple choice, matching, brief answers and short essays. The brief answer questions ask students to comment on a topic and to supply facts, examples or explanations of the answer. Essays ask students to analyze a topic related to something we have covered in class or readings. A separate memo posted on the website in the “Background” module discusses quizzes and the final exam in greater depth.

Late / missed work, quizzes or exam: The syllabus (following) and the website list the dates that work is due. All work is expected to be completed on time so that lectures are more meaningful, class sessions can be based on common knowledge (and consequently be more interesting and informed), and so that no one benefits from additional time that others did not have.

While I expect that assignments will be turned in by the due dates posted on the schedule, these are unusual times and I understand people are facing unusual challenges, beyond the ordinary ones. So, if you have good cause for missing the assigned due date (e.g., illness, serious family emergency), please let me know as soon as possible if you are unable to turn an assignment in on time because of an emergency.

During the semester we will have guest speakers. Please be particularly conscientious of being ready to start on time and courteous by keeping your computer on mute when you are not talking, and participating when you are invited. Additionally, if you have the technological capacity to attend via video, that is particularly helpful with guest speakers.

Problems or issues: Please check with me if you experience or anticipate any problems or issues coming up with regard to the class. I will try to balance individual situations with fairness to the class as a whole, since many people face multiple challenges in their lives. Since problems are best dealt with early on, getting in touch sooner rather than later is best.

## **Tentative Course Calendar and Assignments**

Background documents regarding the course and many reading assignments are posted on the course website. Look at the Modules to find files sorted into course units. Among documents posted, for example, are descriptions of the writing assignments, finding courts to observe, quizzes and other material. Please familiarize yourself with the website now and check it at least weekly, though preferably more often.

The syllabus is subject to change. As soon as I know of a change in the syllabus, I will post an announcement on the Canvas website. Please make sure that your email address connected with Canvas is one that you check.

Additional readings are assigned beyond those in the syllabus. As the semester progresses, I will post new readings from current events on the course website.

In some areas, the reading assignment is to skim material. I will lecture on the same topic as the reading. You will be responsible for the understanding the information conveyed in lecture. For some people the reading will be review in parts; for others it will be new. The material to be skimmed provides a deeper explanation of what is covered in lecture, or a sampling of related material. You will not be responsible for understanding the details of the content of skimmed material, but should understand the general concepts involved.

## **Justice Studies policies**

### Reading and writing philosophy

Departmental policy is to include the following paragraph in every JS course syllabus:

The Department of Justice Studies is committed to scholarly excellence. Therefore, the Department promotes academic, critical, and creative engagement with language (i.e., reading and writing) throughout its curriculum. A sustained and intensive exploration of language prepares students to think critically and to act meaningfully in interrelated areas of their lives—personal, professional, economic, social, political, ethical, and cultural. Graduates of the Department of Justice Studies leave San José State University prepared to enter a range of careers and for advanced study in a variety of fields; they are prepared to more effectively identify and ameliorate injustice in their personal, professional and civic lives. Indeed, the impact of literacy is evident not only within the span of a specific course, semester, or academic program but also over the span of a lifetime.

Passing grades: Students must achieve a grade of "C" or better (not C-) to fulfill Justice Studies major requirements.

## **CoSS Student Success Center**

The Academic Counseling Center for Excellence in the Social Sciences provides General Education advising for undergraduate students majoring or intending to major in any of the departments in the College of Social Sciences (CoSS). Information about ACCESS can be found here: <https://www.sjsu.edu/access/> and you can make an appointment via this link <https://sjsu.campus.eab.com/student/appointments/new>.

## **Library Liaison**

The Department's library liaison is Nyle Monday, [nyle.monday@sjsu.edu](mailto:nyle.monday@sjsu.edu).

## **University Policies**

The Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs maintains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. All syllabus-related University Policies and resources information are listed on GUP's Syllabus Information web page at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>.

An additional note about **academic integrity**: Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development (see [http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial\\_affairs/index.html](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html).) Academic dishonesty -- cheating and plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) -- is unacceptable. I report every suspected instance of cheating or plagiarism to the Academic Integrity office for resolution. Violations of the academic integrity policy can result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. Violations of academic integrity rules may affect your graduation and career plans. Please scrupulously observe all academic integrity requirements.

For this class, all assignments are to be completed by you, for this class. If you would like to use for this class any material that you have submitted, or plan to submit, for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors. If you submit something as if it were for this class that either is not your work or was not done for this class, I will report it to the Academic Integrity office for resolution.

The above should be a relief to 99% of you who abide scrupulously by academic integrity principles.

## **Class schedule**

The class schedule, in a separate document, is subject to change.