

Senior Writing Seminar: Insurrection, The January 6 Report Spring 2024

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Syllabus & Course Outline

Course Overview:

Research, writing, and analysis are staples of the legal profession. They represent the basic skills that attorneys perform throughout their careers. This course is intended to further refine your skills in legal research, legal analysis, and legal writing. In a Senior Writing Seminar, students are required to create an advanced legal writing project that involves substantial legal research and sophisticated legal analysis on a topic related to the January 6 Report of the United States House of Representatives January 6th Committee.

Satisfactory completion of the Seminar requires the production of a paper of a minimum of 7,500 words in length (approximately 30 pages), which must involve substantial research and analysis of one or more complex legal issues. The Seminar includes significant writing instruction, Bluebook instruction for writing scholarly papers, and individual formative and summative assessments. Students will be expected to submit a topic, an outline of the proposed paper with a partial bibliography of sources, a first draft of the proposed paper, and a final version. During the last few weeks of the semester, each student will be expected to prepare a 20-minute presentation about the topic of the final paper, using PowerPoint or some other presentation software.

Learning Objectives:

Students who successfully complete this course should be able to complete the following tasks:

- Students will learn to draft scholarly papers worthy of publication and will give presentations to the class about the subject of their papers.
- Students will learn to use the Uniform System of Citation (the “Bluebook”) to reference sources used in a scholarly paper.
- Students will refine their ability to communicate complex legal analysis in clear prose.
- Students will engage in discussions to help them form a professional identity and increase their sensitivity to bias, cross-cultural difference, and/or anti-racism.

Required Text:

The January 6 Report (Harper 2022) with foreword by Ari Melber

Recommended Texts:

The Uniform System of Citation (The Bluebook), 21st ed. (or 22nd ed., if available)
Strunk and White, The Elements of Style (4th ed. 1999) or another reputable style manual

Attendance:

Our class meets twice a week on Monday and Wednesday mornings. As specified in the Rules of the Southern Illinois University School of Law, “regular attendance to class meetings in all courses is expected and required of all students in accordance with the rule to be announced by the professor at the beginning of each course. Attendance will be taken in class and attendance records will be kept. Violation of this rule shall subject the student to penalties”

It is your responsibility to ensure that you sign the attendance sheet during class. You should also note that the School of Law Honor Code states that it is academic misconduct to sign another student’s name to an attendance sheet for a class that the other student did not attend. Students may have no more than a maximum of three absences (partial or total) for any reason (other than jury duty, the student’s hospitalization, military service, religious observances, birth or adoption of the student’s child, or a death in the student’s immediate family – any of which shall be proven by documentation). Students with more than three absences will be referred to the Associate Dean and will be given the lowest possible grade – a failing grade – for the course.

Office Hours:

My door is always open to you, and I am available to meet with you anytime I am in the building; however, I have set aside Mondays from 10:30am to 11:30am just for the purpose of meeting with Seminar students. I’m also available to meet with students by appointment. We can meet in person or via Teams. Please arrange to meet with me during my office hours or suggest another time if my office hours are not convenient for you.

Class Participation:

As a law student, I expect that you will come to class having read the material for the day and ready to participate in class discussion. In addition, students will be expected to invest themselves in the papers and presentations of other students in the class and to contribute helpful comments to improve the works of their classmates. Law school is a learning laboratory, and we can all learn from each other.

Use of Artificial Intelligence:

This is a writing course designed to help you improve your writing. Your written work should be your own, and you may not use Chat GPT or any other form of Artificial Intelligence to assist you in writing your paper. Likewise, you may not write your draft or final paper with the help of any other person; however, you may discuss your research topic(s), research methodology, and research results as you prepare to write your paper. If you are found to have used Artificial Intelligence to write your first draft or your final paper, or if you are found to have had a classmate assist you in writing your paper, you will receive a grade of “F” for the course.

Class Recording:

To facilitate honest and candid discussion of topics that some people might find sensitive, the class conversations will **not** be recorded. This decision is not made lightly; the purpose is to promote a full and fair airing of ideas and perspectives about one of the darkest days in modern American history. Students are strongly encouraged not to miss class because what may be shared during a particular session may be helpful to the paper that each person will be writing.

Assignment Due-Dates:

All written assignments are to be turned in before the start of your class session unless the assignment specifically sets a different deadline. Extensions are generally not permitted and will be given only for extreme circumstances that are clearly beyond your control. If you are not in class on a day that a written assignment is due, it is still your responsibility to make sure that your assignment is turned in on time. Rubrics will be provided in advance of the due date for each assignment. **No assignments will be graded anonymously in this course.**

The important dates for the major written assignments are:

February 26	Topic Selections are due (in-class deadline)
March 18	Outlines (with at least 10 sources listed) are due (in-class deadline)
April 3	First Drafts are due (4:30pm deadline)
April 26	Final Papers are due (4:30pm deadline)

Grading/Scoring of Assignments:

To successfully complete this course, the assignments will be scored as follows:

- Topic Selection (5 points) Your first assignment is to submit a topic for the paper that you plan to write for the course. The Topic Selection should include a working title and a one-paragraph explanation of the reason for your selection and what you hope that your research will reveal. You may subsequently change topics, but a first effort will be required on February 26, 2024.

- **Outline (10 points)** You are expected to submit an outline of the paper you plan to write containing at least headings and topic sentences to provide insight as to what your final project will look like. In addition, you must include full Bluebook citations for at least 10 sources that you plan to use in your paper.
- **First Draft (30 points)** You are expected to submit a first draft of the paper you will submit at the end of the course. The draft should include polished citations for each source cited and should include at least 5,000 words.
- **Final Paper (100 points)** Your final paper should represent your best effort to select a legal issue that arises from the January 6 Report and to write about that topic. The final paper must be typed, double-spaced, in 12-point font, with one-inch margins. Footnotes should be single-spaced. The final paper must be at least 7,500 words.
- **Paper Presentation (15 points)** You will be expected to prepare a 20-minute presentation about the topic of the final paper, using PowerPoint or some other presentation software. In the presentation, each student should explain the thesis of his or her paper, the results of their research efforts, and why the paper adds to the public understanding of one or more legal issues arising from the January 6, 2021, attack on the United States Capitol.

A note about late papers: The Rubric for each assignment (other than the paper presentations) will indicate that a 10% reduction in score will occur if you turn in your paper more than one hour past the announced due-date and time; a 25% reduction in score will occur if you turn in your paper more than 3 hours past the announced due-date and time; a 50% reduction in score will occur if you turn in your paper more than 5 hours past the announced due-date and time; and you will receive a score of “0” if more than 12 hours have passed since the announced due-date and time. **If the percentage reduction in score results in a deduction that is not a whole number, I will round that deduction up to the next whole number.**

Emergency Procedures: We ask that you become familiar with Emergency Preparedness @ SIU. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, on the “Emergency Preparedness @ SIU” website, and through text and email alerts. To register for alerts, visit <http://emergency.siu.edu>.

Disability Policy: SIU Carbondale is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible experience for all students with disabilities. Disability Support Services coordinates the implementation of accommodations. If you think you may be eligible for accommodations but have not yet obtained approval, please contact DSS immediately at 618-453-5738 or disabilityservices.siu.edu. You may request accommodations at any time, but timely requests help to ensure accommodations are in place when needed. Accommodations and services are determined through an interactive process with students and may involve consideration of specific course design and learning objectives in consultation with faculty. Please send approved accommodations to your faculty through the DSS online portal.

Saluki Cares and Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS): The purpose of Saluki Cares is to develop, facilitate and coordinate a university-wide program of care and support for students in any type of distress—physical, emotional, financial, or personal. By working closely with faculty, staff, students, and their families, SIU will continue to display a culture of care and demonstrate to our students and their families that they are an important part of the community. For Information on Saluki Cares: (618) 453-2461, or siucares@siu.edu, <https://salukicare.siu.edu>. Associate Dean Angela Upchurch (aupchurch@siu.edu or (618) 536-8314) is available at the School of Law to help students access university resources. Additionally, counseling services are available through CAPS (*Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) / Student Health Services / SIU*). A counselor is at the law school every Wednesday from noon until 4:30pm in Rm. 268 for drop-in appointments.

Safety Awareness Facts and Education: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: <http://safe.siu.edu>.

Assignments:

Week #1

January 15: No Class – Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

January 17: Please read the Foreword by MSNBC Anchor Ari Melber (pp. v-xxxii), Speaker of the House of Representatives Emerita Nancy Pelosi (pp. viii), House of Representatives January 6 Committee Chair Bennie Thompson (pp. viii-xiii), and House of Representatives January 6 Committee Vice Chair Liz Cheney (pp. xiv-xvii).

Week #2:

January 22: Please read the Executive Summary, Part 1 (pp. 1-98)

January 24: Please read the Executive Summary, Part 2 (pp. 98-134)

Week #3

January 29: Please read Chapter 1 (pp. 195-233)

January 31: Please read Chapter 2 (pp. 263-307)

Week #4

February 5: Please read Chapter 3 (pp. 341-359)

February 7: Please read Chapter 4 (pp. 373-403)

Week #5

February 12: Please read Chapter 5 (pp. 427-469)

February 14: “What Others are Saying” (handouts posted to D2L)

Week #6

February 19: Please read Chapter 6 (pp. 499-540)

February 21: Please read Chapter 7 (pp. 577-612)

Week #7

February 26: Please read Chapter 8 (pp. 637-669)

Proposed Topics are due today at the start of class.

February 28: Presidential Immunity (Please read *Clinton v. Jones*, 520 U.S. 681 (1997), *Nixon v. Fitzgerald*, 457 U.S. 731 (1982), and *United States v. Nixon*, 418 U.S. 683 (1974).)

Week #8 March 4 and March 6

There will be no class meetings this week. Students will be given time for intensive research and writing, and individual conferences will be scheduled to discuss their proposed writing projects.

Spring Break **March 11 and March 13** **(No Class)**

Week #9

March 18: Please read Recommendations (pp. 689-692) and handouts posted to D2L.

Outlines of the Proposed Paper are due at the start of class (including at least 10 sources with proper Bluebook citations).

March 20: The Electoral College and the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (handouts to be posted to D2L)

Week #10

March 25: Insurrections in America's History (handouts to be posted to D2L)

- Bacon's Rebellion (1676)
- American Revolution (1765-1783)
- Shays' Rebellion (1786-1787)
- Whiskey Rebellion (1791-1794)
- Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion (1831)
- U.S. Civil War (1861-1865)
- Capitol Hill Occupied Protest (2020)

March 27: Revisiting January 6 (in-class video presentations)

Week #11

April 1: The Role of the Press in Politics: Fair and Impartial? (handouts to be posted on D2L)

April 3: Presenting with PowerPoint (handouts to be posted to D2L)

The first draft of the final paper is due today no later than 4:30pm.

Week #12 – Week #14

April 8: Solar Eclipse (No Class)

Student Conferences to discuss first drafts will take place this week.

April 10 – April 24: Student Presentations

April 26: The final draft of the student's paper is due today no later than 4:30pm.

To make up for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday and the Solar Eclipse Day, students are expected to devote equivalent time (3 hours) toward intensive research and writing on their papers. Additionally, students will have an individual conference with Professor Alexander after each student's presentation to review their work throughout the semester and to evaluate each student's presentation.