**CONSTITUTIONAL LAW I**

**Spring 2024**

**Professor Mike Ramsey**

**Syllabus**

Class meetings: 5:30 pm to 7:20 pm, Monday and Wednesday

Office Hours: 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm and 7:30 pm to 8:00 pm, Monday and Wednesday (Room 319D, Warren Hall)

Office telephone: 619-260-4145

Email: [mramsey@sandiego.edu](mailto:mramsey@sandiego.edu)

Professor’s website: [www.mdramsey.com](http://www.mdramsey.com)

Course webpage: www.mdramsey.com/index\_files/Page517.htm (please consult this page regularly for assignments and information about the course schedule)

Readings: The required text is Maggs & Smith, *Constitutional Law: A Contemporary Approach* (6th ed., West 2023). There will be some additional readings from sources available as downloads.

Reading assignments will be made at the beginning of each class for the next class meeting, generally according to a schedule distributed at the beginning of each unit of the course. Assignments for upcoming class meetings will be announced in class and posted on the course webpage.

Conduct of Class: Much of the class will proceed through discussion. I expect to call on students during class, and I expect those called upon to be prepared. Voluntary class participation is also encouraged.

Use of laptops and other electronic devices in class for any purposes other than those related to the course is prohibited.

Recordings: All class meetings will be recorded. These recordings will be available to enrolled students via Panopto.  I do not vouch for their quality or usefulness, and they are not a substitute for attending class.  Only students in this course are authorized to view or listen to the recordings.  The recordings are only for personal use in connection with this course. Students may not show them to others, copy them, post them on the internet or otherwise distribute or provide access to them or any part of them. The recordings will be automatically deleted from Panopto after the final exam and students may not retain them or any part of them.

Goals of the Course: This is an introductory course in modern U.S. Constitutional Law, with a focus on contemporary constitutional litigation. Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

* Understand and explain the modern rules, doctrines and leading cases in the areas of separation of powers, federalism and the first amendment;
* Apply these rules, doctrines and leading cases to hypothetical and real constitutional controversies, and distinguish situations where a clear outcome is indicated from situations where arguments are available on both sides of a dispute; and
* Use these rules, doctrines and leading cases to develop persuasive arguments in the context of modern constitutional litigation.

Attendance Policy: Regular attendance is expected and required. Not only do the ABA and USD require attendance, but your presence in class and contributions in this course are important to your overall understanding of the material. Failure to attend class may have a negative impact upon the participation grade (discussed below). In addition, many concepts are covered in class that are not covered at all, or not covered to the same extent or in the same way, in the text. Failure to attend class thus may have a severe effect upon exam performance.

Grading Policies: Grades will be based on a final examination counting 100% of the grade (before giving effect to participation points discussed below). The final examination will be entirely **closed book/notes**, and will be in part an essay test and in part a multiple choice test based in format upon the multistate section of the Bar Exam.

In addition, there will be three non-graded writing assignments during the semester. These will be graded pass/fail, and completion of each of the assignments is a requirement for a passing grade in the course.

I may increase any grade in the course by up to 0.3 points (e.g., from 3.3 (B+) to 3.6 (A-)) for excellent participation in class, and I may decrease any grade by up to 0.3 points for consistent failure to attend or consistent failure to be prepared in class.

The exam will be based only on materials covered in class or in the assigned reading. Information or concepts obtained from other sources (such as commercial outlines) will not receive credit on the exam unless also covered in class or in the assigned reading.

I will be available to discuss grades after the exam. However (except in the case of mathematical or clerical errors) all grades are final. There can be no after-the-fact adjustments.