

PPA 291 ABBREVIATED SYLLABUS

Fall 2009

Greetings to PPA 291 students:

My name is Sherry Dorfman and I am your instructor for this course. I know many of you are eagerly awaiting more information about this course, so I'm going to attempt to answer some of your questions now and prepare for our first class session on September 11-12. A more thorough syllabus will be available soon, but for now, this should get you started.

Your Email Address

First, I want to confirm that I have your correct email address. Please respond to this message with your name in the subject line, (the way you would like to be addressed in class). For instance, if your name is "Donald," perhaps you prefer Don. I expect we will all be on a first name basis. That includes me - I'm Sherry.

My Contact Information

My email address is sdorfman@saclink.csus.edu. I would like to use this address for all class-related communication, but if you have an urgent need to reach me, my alternate email address that I have on my blackberry is sherrydorfman@gmail.com. My phone number is 925-330-5656.

Seminar Session Dates

- September 11-12: The Evolution of an Independent Judiciary in California
- October 2-3: TBA
- November 6-7: TBA
- December 4-5: TBA

WebCT

I'm providing you with some details here regarding books, pre-reading, pre-assignments, etc. I will get the WebCT site established ASAP and let you know when it is available to you. You will be able to access class materials and resource information, as well as communicate with each other and me through the site. If you are not experienced with WebCT (I am not either - yet), it is your responsibility to become familiar with this educational software. Tutorials, etc are available on the site to help you learn how to navigate in this system. This is very important. As we have only four two-day sessions together in person, I will rely on this software to communicate with you regularly - for assignments, links to readings and resources, discussion groups, etc. You will also be able to contact one another freely and have your own discussion groups as you wish.

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Required Reading

All three of the books listed below are available on Amazon.com as well as through other sources. Other readings will be assigned as well, but rather than have a costly reader assembled, I will be using web links and posting documents through WebCT. Some readings will be required, others only recommended.

- Aikman, Alexander B. (2007), *The Art and Practice of Court Administration*
- Tobin Robert W. (1993), *Creating the Judicial Branch: The Unfinished Reform*
- Hacker, Diana, *A Pocket Style Manual* or *A Writer's Reference* (one or the other strongly recommended)

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. If you must miss any part of a class session on a specific day, you must inform me in advance. Except under unusual circumstances, the penalty for missing class is an entire grade per two class sessions missed (e.g., an A- becomes a B-).

Minimum Passing Grade

Please be aware that a minimum grade of B- is required to receive credit toward your certificate. Grades of C+ or lower will not meet the graduate level standard of academic performance necessary to receive a certificate.

Participation

Student participation in class will be evaluated. This component of your grade will be based on contributions to group work, class discussion, and Q&A sessions with guest speakers.

Pre-Assignment: For September 11 & 12

- Reading
 - Aikman, Chapters 1-3
 - Additional reading to be posted on WebCT
- Writing Assignment (DUE IN CLASS ON SEPTEMBER 11)
 - 5 page paper (double spaced, 12 pt font please)
 - The judicial branch, one of the cornerstones of democracy, is a powerful institution and yet, a business in many ways. Its complexity requires an administration to support business functions comparable to those in private business, as well as direct a vast array of work that culminates in judicial authority, e.g., court orders, trials, judgments, etc. Many people, even those who have familiarity or involvement

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with the court, may be surprised to learn about the work that goes on in a court. They might not know, understand, or believe that the court's mission is to ensure fairness and justice for all. Your paper is a discussion of your own view of the court, its mission and operations, from any perspective that reflects your knowledge and experience. Then, selecting any two (and only two) of the following, analyze how their perspectives might differ from or share similarities with each other and as compared to your own.

- Summoned juror
 - Witness in a court case
 - Citizen tax-payer
 - Court employee
 - Legislator
 - Crime victim
 - Judge
 - Law enforcement official
 - Parent amidst divorce
 - College student
- This is a critical thinking piece. Writing this does not hinge on any of the assigned reading. You can be creative in how you approach this, but you must present well thought out ideas that you can support. This assignment is pass/fail. I will provide comments. Consider it a practice writing assignment. Other assignments will be graded.

More detailed information about the course will be forthcoming. Stay tuned. I'm looking forward to meeting all of you.

Best regards,
Sherry Dorfman

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