

## Annual Assessment Report AY 20-21: Legal Studies Minor

### I. LOGISTICS

1. Please indicate the name and email of the program contact person to whom feedback should be sent (usually Chair, Program Director, or Faculty Assessment Coordinator).

Robert Elias, eliasr@usfca.edu

2. Please indicate if you are submitting report for (a) a Major, (b) a Minor, (c) an aggregate report for a Major and Minor (in which case, each should be explained in a separate paragraph as in this template), (d) a Graduate or (e) a Certificate Program.

Minor, Legal Studies

3. Have there been any revisions to the Curricular Map in 2019-2020 academic year? If there has been a change, please submit the new/revised Curricular Map document.

No

### II. MISSION STATEMENT & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Were any changes made to the program mission statement since the last assessment cycle in October 2019? Kindly state "Yes" or "No." Please provide the current mission statement below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current mission statements of both the major and the minor program

**Mission Statement (Major/Graduate/Certificate): NA**

**Mission Statement (Minor):**

No changes

The Legal Studies minor provides students with a broad understanding of the U.S. and international legal systems, from trial courts to the Supreme Court to global courts. It examines the role law plays in society, the legal philosophies we have adopted or rejected, the history of the law, and its practical purposes. The minor examines the relationship between law and politics, and law and society. What can the law contribute to society? What is justice? Can the law help achieve it? Does the law help promote positive social change or rather impede it?

**2. Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle in October 2019? Kindly state “Yes” or “No.” Please provide the current PLOs below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current PLOs for both the major and the minor programs.**

**PLOs (Major/Graduate/Certificate): NA**

**PLOs (Minor):**

No changes.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students will be able to:

(1) Analyze the interdisciplinary literature on justice, law and American society, emphasizing political questions and social science methods and theories. Assess the interdisciplinary literature on international law, human rights and global politics, emphasizing political questions and social science methods/theories. Students will be able to understand the meaning/origins of international human rights norms/standards.

(2) Demonstrate an understanding of the structure of the American legal system, including the court system, and criminal and civil justice systems. Students will be able to describe the political economy and organizational structure of judicial decision-making, using tools of social science analysis.

(3) Demonstrate an understanding of the structure of the international human rights legal system, including governmental and non-governmental institutions on the global, national, and local levels. Students will be able to describe the political economy and organizational structure of human rights decision making, using tools of social science analysis.

(4) Use tools of legal analysis and argumentation to address political controversies and social conflicts in American society, and human rights controversies, such as terrorism, humanitarian intervention, cultural imperialism, & U.S. foreign policy.

## **III. CURRICULAR MAP (no change)**

Core/Overview Course: Politics of American Justice or Sociology of Law

Domestic Justice Course: choose from list

Global Justice Course: choose from list

Internship Course: Public Administration Internship or Fieldwork in Public Interest Organizations (or substitute)

Elective Course: choose from list

#### IV. ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE

2020 – Remote/Hybrid report

2021 – This report

2022 - Legal briefs and Supreme Court opinions from Mock Supreme Court assignments in two courses.

#### V. METHODOLOGY

Comparative Trial Assignment (Great Trials in America)

##### Comparative Trial Paper I

Besides considering each “great trial” on its own, it’s important to examine the relationship between trials. This helps us understand the “big picture” significance of great trials in America, and why we study them.

Choosing among the cases/trials we’ve examined during the **first half of the course** (*up to and including* the O.J. Simpson and other Celebrity trials), you must choose **two (2)** of those trials, and write a **5-6 page double-spaced paper (12 font, 1” margins)** that compares and contrasts the legal, social and political issues they raise. What do they have in common, and how do they differ?

These papers are **not** trial briefs, and should **not** be written as such. For each of the two cases you select, you **should** show your knowledge of the most important facts, the major questions, the trial decision, its impact, and its significance. BUT, that information should be weaved into your narrative (not presented as a brief), with the main purpose being to **compare** two great trials. You should let the reader know **why** you chose your two cases and the **significance** of comparing the two. Are they similar or different, for example, in their historical context, their political environment, their legal questions or strategies, their media coverage, their commentary on American society, their repercussions, or the kind of political trial they represent? And so forth, using whatever criteria you think is suitable.

##### Comparative Trial Paper II

Besides considering each “great trial” on its own, it’s important to examine the relationship between trials. This helps us understand the “big picture” significance of great trials in America, and why we study them.

Choosing among the cases/trials we’ve examined during the **second half of the course** (*trials after the O.J. Simpson and other Celebrity trials*), you must choose **two (2)** of those trials, and write a **5-6 page double spaced paper (12 font, 1” margins)** that compares and contrasts the legal, social and political issues they raise. What do they have in common; how do they differ?

These papers are **not** trial briefs, and should **not** be written as such. For each of the two cases you select, you **should** show your knowledge of the most important facts, the major questions, the trial decision, its impact, and its significance. BUT, that information should be weaved into your narrative (not presented as a brief), with the main purpose being to **compare** two great trials. You should let the reader know **why** you chose your two cases and the **significance** of comparing the two. Are they similar or different, for example, in their historical context, their political environment, their legal questions or strategies, their media coverage, their commentary on American society, their repercussions, or the kind of political trial they represent? And so forth, using whatever criteria you think is suitable.

## **VI. FINDINGS**

These assignments in the Great Trials in America course address Learning Objective #4:

*Use tools of legal analysis and argumentation to address political controversies and social conflicts in American society, and human rights controversies, such as terrorism, humanitarian intervention, cultural imperialism, & U.S. foreign policy*

In the course, students consider major controversies in U.S. political history through landmark trials. Besides teaching political and legal history, the trials teach legal analysis; that is, how to breakdown the components of these legal battles and understand the trials in the political context of the eras when they were conducted.

The Comparative Trials Assignment is administered twice in the course. Students are asked not only to use tools of legal analysis of single trials, but also to find ways of contrasting similarities and differences in two different trials. This requires thinking beyond mere description.

Requiring this assignment twice during the semester allows us to not only assess student understanding in each paper, but also to assess student progress in their analytical skills from one assignment to the next. Comparing the results of these assignments, students show a notable improvement in Comparative Paper II compared to Comparative Paper I. Students were more creative and insightful, overall, on the second assignment, and thus the grades improved.

## **VII. SHARING FINDINGS**

The results of this test of Learning Outcome #4 have been sent to the relevant faculty. Other measures for assessing performance have been discussed for use in subsequent reports.