SEMINAR IN LAW AND SOCIETY (LAW: 525)
Fall, 2009
Professor J. L. Gibson

Course Description:

This seminar is designed as a survey of important research areas within the broad subfield of “Empirical Law Studies.” Areas to be examined in the seminar include courts and public policy making; civil liberties and political tolerance; criminal justice; the legal profession; juries; legitimacy and compliance with law; law and social change; procedural justice; transitional justice; and comparative legal systems. The seminar will focus in general on understanding, synthesizing, and evaluating the broad range of empirical research conducted under the multidisciplinary rubric “law and society,” and in particular on research associated with the blossoming Empirical Legal Studies movement.

Meeting Times and Location:

Tuesdays, 16:15 – 19:15
Room 271

Grading Elements:

Class participation (20 %); final research paper (80 %; see below)
No final exam will be administered

Seminar Rules:

You must complete all of the assignments by the end of the term. I also observe all university drop and other deadlines. You should familiarize yourself with the university's rules on ethics and academic misconduct. I strictly adhere to these rules.

Contact Information:

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Required Books (all available in the bookstore):


Research Paper:

The research paper will constitute 80 percent of your final grade. You should select a topic within the broad rubric of law and society issues. I am very flexible as to the subject matter of your paper, and I believe it possible to transform virtually any of your substantive interests into a question of law, politics, and society. I encourage you to write either an empirical analysis of theoretically-derived hypotheses or design a research project, but I am willing to discuss and negotiate virtually any approach you want to take to your topic. You would profit most from an emphasis in your paper on hypothesis testing – either planning to test hypotheses or actually testing hypotheses. Depending upon your interests, I may have data – even very fresh data – available that you can analyze. Papers based on actual empirical analysis must be started early due to the inevitable difficulties of completing them in the course of a single term. Your paper should be a minimum of 35 pages and a maximum of 50 pages long, with these limits strictly enforced. You should use a standard format (e.g., 1 inch margins) in preparing your paper.

The final paper is due on December 14, 2009. You must turn the paper in to the Registrar by 4:00 p.m. on the 14th. Following Law School rules, there are severe penalties (e.g., one letter grade per day) for late papers (if they are accepted at all). Throughout the term, you will be required to give oral reports to me on the progress of your paper.

The general approach to writing this paper should be one of preparing an article for publication. You may wish to select a particular article you like and copy its style and organization. You should use a style manual in writing your paper. I do not care which one – but would recommend the style of the *Law and Society Review* – but you should select a style, and use it consistently.
READING ASSIGNMENTS

9/22  Organizational Seminar
      Social Science Approaches to the Study of Law, Politics, and Society


http://www.sunysb.edu/polsci/jsegal/qualtable.pdf  Review this webpage


10/6  No Class (Flyback #2)

10/13  Why People Obey the Law: Compliance and Institutional Legitimacy


-3-
Courts and Public Opinion: Causes and Consequences


Judicial Campaigns and Elections


11/3 **Issues in Civil Justice**


11/10 **The Cultural Context of Law: Legal Cultures**


11/17 **The Legal Profession**


11/24 **No Class – Thanksgiving**
The Impact of Courts on Society


Term Paper Due