

PLSC 471: American Constitutional Law

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August 26, 2025

Course Goals

1. Understand the institutional, historical, and legal bases for the exercise of sovereign power in the U.S.
2. Understand the importance of political factors on the evolution and application of constitutional law.

- Course meetings: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:35-11:50 a.m. ET.
- Location is Carpenter 107
- No class on October 30 (wellness day) or November 25 & 27 (Thanksgiving break)
- Course materials are at:
<https://github.com/PrisonRodeo/PLSC471-FA2025-git/>

Course Readings

- No textbook / casebook
- Primary sources (statutes, cases, etc.) + news and commentary
- Syllabus may be updated periodically, as events dictate...
- *All* readings will be available on the course Github repository

Two options:

1. Option A:

- Midterm (350 points)
- Final (650 points)

2. Option B

- Midterm (200 points)
- Final (400 points)
- Course paper (400 points)

Choose by September 23

Exams:

- Midterm: October 9
- Final: December ??

Communication, etc.

- (Non-virtual) Office: 545 Susan Welch Liberal Arts Building
- Zoom: <https://psu.zoom.us/my/prisonrodeo>
- Office Hours: By appointment
- E-mail: zorn@psu.edu
- Mobile Phone / Text: 803-553-4077
- Bluesky: [@prisonrodeo](#)

Things To Do Before Thursday

1. Bookmark:

<https://github.com/PrisonRodeo/PLSC471-FA2025-git>

2. Read:

Epstein, Lee, Kevin McGuire, and Thomas G. Walker. 2024.
“[Understanding the U.S. Supreme Court.](#)” In *Constitutional Law for a Changing America: Institutional Powers and Constraints*. Sage Publications.