Boston College Mission Statement

Strengthened by more than a century and a half of dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits itself to the highest standards of teaching and research in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs and to the pursuit of a just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and the achievements of its graduates. It seeks both to advance its place among the nation's finest universities and to bring to the company of its distinguished peers and to contemporary society the richness of the Catholic intellectual ideal of a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry.

Boston College draws inspiration for its academic societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, it is rooted in a world view that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together. In this spirit, the University regards the contribution of different religious traditions and value systems as essential to the fullness of its intellectual life and to the continuous development of its distinctive intellectual heritage.

Course Description

It is often said we are a society of law and not people. This course examines how the law affects individual lives. After an introduction to the legal system, the class deals with citizen’s rights and responsibilities under the U.S. Constitution. Topics include constitutional law, basic contract problems, criminal law, issues of fraud and privacy in an electronic age, developments in simplifying legal concepts, property, tort as well as family, juvenile and business law.

Course Objectives

To encourage students to understand their rights, rights of others in various areas of the law. Provide students with a basic knowledge or laws that may affect their daily lives. Guide students to understand the theory behind the laws of Massachusetts and the United States. Provide guidance to those students who may be interested in the pursuit of a law degree.

This is a lecture class. That said, class participation is essential to the learning process as well as your final grade. Since 1994 I have not used a book to supplement the class. Rather I have relied upon a creation of notes on various topics that we will cover in class. Those notes are recast each year as the law evolves in the various areas of the law that is covered. Attendance as noted below is paramount to be successful in the class.

It is my objective that the students will be inspired to participate in the process of the class to encourage debate on topics.

1. Understanding that this is an introduction to the law class; it is expected that through their life experiences and what they have come to learn through reported cases, the students will have some working knowledge of the basic tenants of the law, whether it be constitutional, criminal, commercial or family law.

2. The student should come prepared to support their beliefs and how the law affects their beliefs. I believe that a good learning environment is premised upon the participation of the students as well as the clear presentment of the law by the teacher. I tend to cite common examples to help define the law to the students.

3. The student will learn about how the laws of the Commonwealth and the United States affect them. The student will develop an understanding the impact of culture, gender, and age discrimination and the legal system’s mission to eradicate discrimination at all levels.
4. The student will be provided with and will be required to discuss ethical legal dilemmas that the appellate courts of the Commonwealth deal with on a daily basis.

**Grading**

Historically the grading of this class has been based upon three parts. The first is either a midterm examination or a paper on a legal topic that is of interest to the student. In my democracy, the students elect at the beginning of the year to select a paper for the midterm or a midterm examination. Cognizant of the fact that this is an elective, I tend to have the paper or midterm due after the core required mid terms. This I believe allows for the student to concentrate on his/her core courses and also allows for time to really do well on a paper or the exam depending upon the class majority vote. Generally the paper or exam is worth 50% of your grade.

The second part of my grading is based upon a final examination. This may encompass the entire year or the second half of the year depending upon the vote for the midterm. In the class prior to the final exam I require the attendance of all students in what I have dubbed “Superclass.” At the Superclass the students will arrive with their notebooks and they will be free to request clarity on any portion of the class throughout the semester. I find that students will fill in the gaps of their notes to perform better on the final examination. Generally the final exam is worth 50% of your grade.

Finally I consider the participation level of each student throughout the year to increase or decrease their grade. As an example, if the student received a B on their midterm and a B on their final and highly participated in class during the year they would likely receive a B+. Conversely if there was limited to no participation throughout the year they would receive a B-.

**WCAS Grading System**

The undergraduate grading system consists of twelve categories: A (4.00), A- (3.67), excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), good; C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67), satisfactory; D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (1.67), passing but unsatisfactory; F (.00), failure; I (.00), incomplete; F (.00), course dropped without notifying office; W (.00), official withdrawal from course.

Grade Reports. All students are required to log into the web through Agora to access their semester grades. Students must utilize their BC username and password to log on. If your username or password is not known the HELP Desk located in the Campus Technology Resource Center (CTRC) in O’Neil Library will issue a new one. The CTRC requires a valid picture ID (a BC ID, driver’s license or passport) to obtain your password.

**Text(s)/Readings**

While there is no required reading for the class, generally a case or cases may be handed out during the year for the students to review and subsequently comment upon at the next class. I offer various supplemental reading to any student who seeks to learn more about a certain topic as the semester progresses.

**Important Policies**

[http://www.bc.edu/content/bc-schools/advstudies/guide/academicinteg.html](http://www.bc.edu/content/bc-schools/advstudies/guide/academicinteg.html)

**Written Work**

Graduate and undergraduate students are expected to prepare professional, polished written work. Written materials must be typed in the format required by your instructor. Strive for a thorough, yet concise style. Cite literature appropriately, using APA, MLA, CLA format per instructors decision. Develop your thoughts fully, clearly, logically and specifically. Proofread all materials to ensure the use of proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling. You are encouraged to make use of campus resources for refining writing skills as needed [http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html].
Scholarship and Academic Integrity
It is expected that students will produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to reference properly is plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on examinations or assignments, and submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student’s work.

Request for Accommodations
If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with either Dr. Kathy Duggan (dugganka@bc.edu), Associate Director, Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities or AHD) or Dean Paulette Durrett, (paulette.durrett@bc.edu), Assistant Dean for students with disabilities, (all other disabilities). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.

http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/libraries/help/tutoring/specialservices.html.

Attendance
Class attendance is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive by the beginning of and remain for the entire class period. When an occasion occurs that prevents a student from attending class, it is the student’s obligation to inform the instructor of the conflict before the class meets. The student is still expected to meet all assignment deadlines. If a student knows that he or she will be absent on a particular day, the student is responsible for seeing the instructor beforehand to obtain the assignments for that day. If a student misses a class, he or she is responsible for making up the work by obtaining a classmate's notes and handouts and turning in any assignments due. Furthermore, many instructors give points for participation in class. If you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Types of absences that are not typically excused include weddings, showers, vacations, birthday parties, graduations, etc. Additional assignments, penalties and correctives are at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. In all cases, students are expected to accept the decision of the instructor regarding attendance policies specific to the class.

Consistent with our commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their academic obligations. It is the responsibility of students to review course syllabi as soon as they are distributed and to consult the faculty member promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. If asked, the student should provide accurate information about the obligations entailed in the observance of that particular holiday. However, it is the responsibility of the student to complete any and all class requirements for days that are missed due to conflicts due to religious holidays.

There may be circumstances that necessitate a departure from this policy. Feel free to contact the WCAS at 617-552-3900 for consultation.

Deadlines
Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified dates. Late assignments will be graded accordingly. It should be noted that I do not accept late papers, if the class selects a midterm paper. I have afforded the students the opportunity to concentrate on their core classes during the midterms. As a result I fully expect that given that benefit the students will all have their papers emailed to me by midnight of the date selected by the class for the midterm paper( if a paper is the
elected midterm). The result of failing to hand in a paper on time will severely impact the final grade.

**Course Assignments** (readings, exercises and/or experiences)

Throughout the term the class will be on notice of what we will be discussing the following week as strict adherence to the syllabus will not be possible. As a result it is expected that the students will be ready to tackle and debate the topics the following week. I believe that a review of the prior student’s comments about the class will provide a clear indication of what is expected in class. I take the time to ensure that each student gets the material presented at each class. I pride myself on being able to provide concrete examples of what I am teaching to the students in lay person’s terms so that they are able to digest and understand the material.

**Appendix A**

1. INTRO TO CLASS
2. CRIM LAW
3. CRIM LAW
4. CRIM PROCEDURE
5. CRIM PROCEDURE
6. CRIM PROCEDURE
7. CONSTITUTIONAL LAW
8. EVIDENCE
9. PROPERTY
10. TORTS
11. WILLS, TRUSTS, ESTATES
12. CORPORATIONS
13. CONTRACTS
14. SUPER CLASS (review of semester notes and practical exam tips)
15. FINAL EXAMINATION

*The above topics will be covered during the semester. The exact order of the topics may vary according to timing.*