

**Federal Courts
Law 6232 – Section 10
Fall 2025**

SYLLABUS

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 1:30 - 2:30 p.m.

Class Schedule: Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, 10:40 - 11:35 a.m. Classes will begin promptly at the appointed time.

Required Texts: Siegel, *Federal Courts: Cases and Materials* (Aspen 3d ed. 2023)
Siegel, *2025-2026 Supplement* (available on my website)

You should bring your casebook to class every day. I frequently refer to material in the casebook by page number. These references are easier to follow if you have your casebook with you.

Assignments: A list of reading assignments is attached. You should read each assignment before the class in which the assigned material is discussed, think carefully about the reading, and be prepared to participate in class discussion. The assignment numbers correspond roughly to class periods, but the precise assignment for each class will be announced during the previous class or by email. If at the end of any class we have made substantial progress on the materials so far assigned and no announcement is made, read the next assignment. For the first class, read assignments 0 and 1 (that's "1", not "I").

Requirements: The requirements for all students are: read the assignments in a timely fashion, attend class, participate in class discussion, and take the final exam. Grades will be based primarily on the final exam, with class participation also considered.

Class Participation: Students will be called on at random during class within the context of a system that will give everyone one day a week off from being called on. Volunteer participation is also encouraged.

Please participate in class discussion civilly and respectfully. The study of law involves many controversial issues on which people have widely varying opinions. The materials in this course lend themselves to differing opinions depending on one's ideological point of view. Students of differing legal,

political, and ideological views should all feel welcome to participate in our class discussions. Students are welcome to disagree with me or with other students and to express that disagreement in class but should always do so in a civil and respectful manner.

Communication: I frequently send important messages relating to the course to students by email. This will likely occur before the first day of class. Students are responsible for checking their official GW email account daily throughout the term.

Examination: The exam will be open book. The exam may contain a mixture of essay and multiple choice questions. Further details will be provided before the exam.

Students are strongly encouraged to use computers to type their exam answers. Students who choose to handwrite their exam answers are cautioned that words that are not readily legible may be disregarded. Students who require an exception to this rule for a legitimate reason (e.g., disability) should discuss the matter with the University's Office of Disability Support Services (see below) and/or the Law School's Dean of Students Office well in advance of the exam. Please do not discuss this issue with me directly as doing so could interfere with the anonymity of the exam process.

Names & Pronouns: I generally use first names when calling on students. I will invite students to let me know the name by which they wish to be called in advance of the first class. If a student submits no preferred name, I will use the student's official, registered first name. Students who wish to inform me of their pronouns may do so at the same time.

Disabilities: Students who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS) at 202-994-8250 (Rome Hall, Suite 102), to establish eligibility. Once a student is registered and deemed eligible for accommodation, the student should contact the Dean of Students Office at 202-994-8320 to coordinate reasonable accommodations (e.g., note-taking assistance, adaptive technologies, etc.).

Learning Outcomes: A student who completes this course should have knowledge and understanding of Federal Courts law and the role of the federal courts in the American system of government. The student should understand the conditions for creating a justiciable case upon which federal courts can act; federal jurisdiction, including Congress's role in shaping it; the special considerations that apply to lawsuits against governments and government officers; and the relationships between the federal and state court systems.

Taping of classes: All classes will be taped. The tapes will be posted and available for all students.

Attendance: Even though all classes are taped, attendance is mandatory. Watching the tape of a class does not excuse failure to attend class. Students who are persistently and excessively absent will not receive a positive class participation adjustment and may receive a negative class participation adjustment or a grade of No Credit. Occasional, isolated absences do not directly affect a student's grade, and students need not seek permission for such absences.

Students must sit in their assigned seats when present in in-person classes. Students who fail to sit in their assigned seats may be deemed absent.

Qwickly: **As mandated by the Law School, we will use the Qwickly app to track attendance.*** I will provide a code number at the start of each class. Students must enter this number into Qwickly to confirm that they attended class that day. Students should familiarize themselves with Qwickly before classes begin.

Obviously, it would be easy to circumvent Qwickly (e.g., by having a friend send you the code when you are absent), but students should not do so. Falsely pretending to be present in class would constitute academic dishonesty, the penalties for which are extremely serious.

Devices: Students must make sure that their cell phones, computers, and any other devices they may have do not make any noise that could interrupt the class. The "vibrate" setting is permitted. Computers that make noise on start-up should not be started once class has begun. Students whose devices violate this rule may be asked to leave the classroom.

The use of devices in class to take notes is permitted. Students should bear in mind that some studies suggest that taking notes by hand promotes better learning, although other studies have called these results into question.[†]

Devices may also be used in class to access course materials and to register attendance with Qwickly.

The use of devices during class for any other purposes, such as playing games, surfing the Internet, or reading or sending messages, is distracting to other students and is therefore prohibited. Students who use devices during class are on their honor to comply with this rule.

* GW Law has (newly this year) mandated the use of Qwickly to track attendance in all classes of 20 or more.

[†] See Susan Dynarski, *Laptops Are Great. But Not During a Lecture or a Meeting*, N.Y. Times, Nov. 22, 2017. But see *Don't Ditch the Laptop Just Yet: Replication Finds No Immediate Advantage to Writing Notes by Hand*, available at www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/writing-notes.

The use of electronic means to transmit answers to students being asked questions during class is prohibited. Violation of this rule constitutes academic dishonesty.

Distancing: The COVID pandemic called attention to the role of proximity in spreading illness. If you ever need to tell me that you are sick (regardless of what you are sick with), please do not walk up close to me to tell me. Email me or tell me from 6 feet away.

Gifts: It is my policy not to accept gifts from GW students. Accordingly, please do not give me any gifts (even after the course is over). I feel amply rewarded for my teaching, both by getting paid for it and by having the privilege of watching students learn.

READING ASSIGNMENTS -- Part 1

The initial list of reading assignments follows. Further reading assignments will be distributed as the term progresses. Constitutional and statutory materials that appear in the reading assignments may be found in the Supplement.

Abbreviations used below:

S	Siegel, <i>Federal Courts: Cases and Materials</i> (3d ed. 2023)
Supp.	Siegel, <i>2024-2025 Supplement to Federal Courts</i>

0. Background

Read this syllabus, particularly the initial information that precedes the reading assignments. The syllabus contains course rules and requirements and other important information that students are responsible for knowing. Failure to comply with the course rules and requirements stated in the syllabus may result in grade penalties or a grade of No Credit.

It will be assumed many times during the course that you are familiar with the Constitution of the United States. Your knowledge from Constitutional Law I should be sufficient. If you have not looked at the Constitution in a while, you might wish to refresh your memory of it, particularly the following:

Article I, §§ 1, 6, 8, 9, and 10
Article II, § 1, cl. 1, §§ 2, 3, 4
Article III
Article IV, § 1
Article VI, cls. 2, 3
Amendments I, V, VII, X, XI
Amendment XIV, §§ 1, 5

I. The Judicial Function

The Nature of the Judicial Function

1. S 3-17
2. S 17-23

II. Justiciability

Advisory Opinions; Finality

3. S 25-40
U.S. Const., Art. I, § 6, cl. 2

Standing to Sue

4. *Doctrinal Foundations*
S 40-47
5. *Injury*
S 47-64
After note 6 on S 58, read the corresponding material at Supp. 1
6. *Causation and Redressability*
S 64-73
New paragraphs 6-8 on Supp. 1-3
7. *Congressional Control*
S 73-92
After reading note 4 on S 75 read the corresponding material on Supp. 3
8. *Standing and Remedies / Limitations on Remedies*
S 92-99
Supp. 16-27
9. *Zone of Interests*
S 105-123
10. *Third Party Standing*
S 123-137

Mootness

11. S 137-155

After reading S 143, read the corresponding material on Supp. 27-28.
Substitute note 2 on Supp. 28 for note 2 on S 148.

Political Question

12. S 171-190

13. S 190-203

III. Congressional Control of Federal Jurisdiction

14. S 205-224

15. S 224-234

IV. Congressional Control of State Court Jurisdiction

16. S 276-293, 300-305

V. The Law Applied in Federal Courts

Swift and Erie

17. S 307-322

Federal Common Law

18. S 363-388

Rights of Action

19. S 388-406

VI. Federal Jurisdiction

Federal Question Jurisdiction

20. *Judicial Power Under Article III*
U.S. Const., Art. III, § 2
28 U.S.C. § 1257, 1331
S 407-425

21. *Statutory Jurisdiction*
 S 425-445

Supplemental Jurisdiction

22. S 472-489
 28 U.S.C. § 1367