

Professor Samuel P. Stafford
Department of Political Science
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Office Hours: Thursdays 11:00AM-12:00PM (and by appointment) on Zoom
(Meeting ID: 919 2798 1861)

Please direct all course questions to Valerie Sheehe via email (**not through Canvas**) with the course code in the subject line.

The Run of His Life: *The People v. O.J. Simpson*
IDH2930: (Un)common Read - Section 29574
Friday, Period 6, 12:50PM-1:40PM
LIT117

COURSE DESCRIPTION

After a trial that lasted 252 days, a jury took less than 4 hours to reach their “not guilty” verdict and acquit Orenthal James (O.J.) Simpson of double homicide charges. In this course, students will encounter in-depth coverage and accounts of events that would become known as “the trial of the century.” Through reading and digesting Jeffrey Toobin’s *The Run of His Life*, students will follow the story and history of O.J. Simpson from his arrest for the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman to his acquittal in a trial by jury. Each week, students will encounter new actors and events that contributed to the high-stakes, high-profile criminal trial that forced America to confront important questions about race, wealth/privilege, celebrity, and the criminal justice system. In analyzing Toobin’s novel, students will learn about and pragmatically discuss: criminal law/procedure, police action and perception by the public, the perception and role of race and wealth in the criminal justice system, and gender in the workplace, among many other paramount themes. This one-credit, semester-long course will culminate into a final, capstone project that allows students to further investigate one crucial aspect of the trial or the larger criminal justice system that is of burning interest to them.

While the events surrounding Simpson’s trial transpired in the mid- to late-1990s, students will be provided the opportunity to compare and contrast those historical and cultural patterns and situations with relevant current events of today. This classroom will be a safe space to discuss personal opinions and identities, creating an inclusive learning environment that can challenge previously conceived beliefs about the criminal justice system.

Content advisory: The material and stories provided as the springboard for class discussion and development are generally uncensored for the sake of academic enrichment. As we will address hot-button issues of socioeconomic status, race, culture, and related social topics, I ask that we comport ourselves in a professional manner and refrain from personal attacks. If any person finds any topic sufficiently disturbing or sensitive that you prefer not to be called upon to discuss, please speak to the

Student Instructor before class. Do not hesitate to contact the Student Instructor with any concerns or questions throughout the semester.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Students will describe and dissect the major components and details of the O.J. Simpson criminal trial
2. Students will gain a basic understanding of the United States criminal legal system, particularly focusing on criminal law and procedure, when applied to people of higher socioeconomic status
3. Students will reflect upon their previous knowledge of the criminal justice system in conjunction with a myriad of diverse, scholarly sources to test their current views or invent new perspectives
4. Students will analyze key similarities and differences of law enforcement and the courts between 1990s America and today with an emphasis on the operation of the criminal justice system and its relationship with the public
5. Students will be better able to define “justice” in the context of a criminal trial, and be better able to objectively identify the factors that may or may not preclude a person from receiving “justice” in our current criminal justice system

REQUIRED MATERIALS

The Run of His Life: *The People v. O.J. Simpson*, Jeffrey Toobin, (Random House, 1996).

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

These materials are not required for the course, but will provide more context/background and various perspectives, if you choose to explore them.

The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story, Ryan Murphy and Brad Falchuk, (FX, 2016), found on Hulu and other video streaming platforms

You’re Wrong About: *The O.J. Simpson Trial*, selected episodes, podcast by Sarah Marshall and Michael Hobbes (2018), found wherever podcasts are available

Additional materials as discovered and revealed during the semester.

ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly Reflection Entries (40%): Each week, students will be expected to submit a journal entry/reflection after completing the required reading. Responses must be a minimum of 200 words and should demonstrate an ability to think critically about the reading. Reflections can consist of, but are not limited to, general thoughts about the reading, connections to previous chapters or current events, or personal experiences relating to the content. These, in addition to the instructor-prepared questions, will guide the course of the weekly discussions and provide an opportunity for students to address aspects of the novel most meaningful to them. These reflections will be due on Canvas no later than 11:59PM each Thursday before class.

Attendance/Participation (20%): Students must complete the required reading before each class and will be expected to actively and thoughtfully engage in class discussion. Further information about attendance policies can be found in the “Attendance” section of the syllabus.

Criminal Law and Procedure Pre-Assessment (5%): On the first day of class, students will be given access to a quiz focusing on the basics of the United States legal system, criminal law, and criminal procedure to gauge their overall knowledge before covering the book. The quiz will be completed on Canvas and students will be graded on completion, not accuracy.

Mock Jury Assignment (5%): After discussing the final chapter in the book and possessing additional, acquired knowledge, students will become the ‘jury’ and render a verdict for Simpson’s trial. Students will be expected to make an informed decision/verdict after ‘deliberation’ based on the evidence, events, and circumstances covered throughout the course. Students will submit a brief (1-2 paragraph) reflection on Canvas detailing the experience. Students will be graded on completion, not accuracy.

Re-Argument Assignment (15%): Students will be required to select a flaw or mistake made by someone who held a substantial role in the Simpson trial, including either a prosecutor or defense attorney, the presiding judge, or a key witness. Students will be required to describe the specific flaw, propose why and how it may have impacted the course of the trial, discuss any applicable reactions from others, and finally, how the flaw could have been remedied. Each student must submit their Re-Argument on Canvas as a 1 page paper, with the option for in-class presentations. More information will be disseminated in class and can be found in the Assignments tab on Canvas.

Final Project (15%): Students will be expected to complete a final project that utilizes the information gained from the course materials, as well as their own evolving knowledge of the criminal justice system, to focus on one aspect of the trial, legal system, characters, etc they found the most compelling. Students will have broad discretion to choose their topic but must meet with the Student Instructor at least once during the semester for approval. The Final Project can be delivered as a 3-5 page paper, a 5-7 minute presentation, a 5-7 minute podcast, or another idea of their choosing with prior instructor approval. Students may work individually or in groups up to four (4). The Final Project will be due on Canvas by **Wednesday, May 3 at 11:59PM.**

LATE WORK

All due dates for assignments are fixed and late work will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the Student Instructor.

GRADING

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

93.0-100.0	A
90.0-92.9	A-

87.0-89.9	B+
84.0-86.9	B
80.0-83.9	B-
77.0-79.9	C+
74.0-76.9	C
70.0-73.9	C-
67.0-69.9	D+
64.0-66.9	D
60.0-63.9	D-
0.00-59.9	E

If you have a question or concern about any aspect of the course, please email Valerie Sheehe. For more information on grades and grading policies, visit the UF Undergraduate Catalog:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/#gradestext>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note: this course syllabus is a general plan for the course and deviations from this outline will be necessary. Any changes or alterations will be announced by the Student Instructor in class and on Canvas, as soon as practically possible.

WEEK	READING SCHEDULE (due before that week's class)	ASSIGNMENTS (due before/during that week's class)
Week 1 – 1/13	N/A	N/A
Week 2 – 1/20	Prologue & Chapter 1	Weekly Reflection #1; Criminal Law and Procedure Pre-Assessment – due 1/19 at 11:59PM
Week 3 – 1/27	Chapters 2 & 3	Weekly Reflection #2 – due 1/26 at 11:59PM
Week 4 – 2/3	Chapters 4 & 5	Weekly Reflection #3 - due 2/2 at 11:59PM
Week 5 – 2/10	Chapters 6 & 7	Weekly Reflection #4 - due 2/9 at 11:59PM
Week 6 – 2/17	Chapters 8 & 9	Weekly Reflection #5 - due 2/16 at

		11:59PM
Week 7 – 2/24	Chapters 10 & 11	Weekly Reflection #6 - due 2/23 at 11:59PM
Week 8 – 3/3	Chapters 12 & 13	Weekly Reflection #7 - due 3/2 at 11:59PM
Week 9 – 3/10	Chapters 14 & 15	Weekly Reflection #8 - due 3/9 at 11:59PM
3/17	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS	N/A
Week 10 – 3/24	Chapters 16 & 17	Weekly Reflection #9 - due 3/23 at 11:59PM
Week 11 – 3/31	Chapters 18 & 19	Weekly Reflection #10 - due 3/30 at 11:59PM
Week 12 – 4/7	Chapters 20 & 21	Weekly Reflection #11 - due 4/6 at 11:59PM
Week 13 – 4/14	Chapters 22 & 23; Epilogue	Weekly Reflection #12 - due 4/13 at 11:59PM Mock Jury Assignment – due 4/16 at 11:59PM
Week 14 – 4/21	Re-Argument Assignment Presentations	Re-Argument Assignment - due 4/21 at 11:59PM
Week 15 – 4/28	READING DAY/NO CLASS – Work on Final Project	Final Project – due 5/3 at 11:59PM

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory for the benefit of everyone in the course; only by showing up to class will students be able to engage in thoughtful discussion and learn from each other. If something should arise that warrants an absence, please email Valerie Sheehe with proper documentation. Students will be allowed one (1) unexcused absence before their grade is affected.

Requirements for class attendance, definitions of ‘excused absences,’ and make-up assignments in this course are consistent with university policy and can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

Students are expected to uphold the UF Student Honor Code. Plagiarism and/or cheating on any assignment will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is representing the work of another as all or any portion of the student’s own work. Students found to be engaging in these behaviors will receive a zero (0) for that

assignment, regardless of the student's intent. Disciplinary action will follow university policy outlined by the Dean of Students: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodations. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

COURSE EVALUATIONS

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website (<https://umatter.ufl.edu/>) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website (<https://counseling.ufl.edu/>) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website: <https://shcc.ufl.edu/>

University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website (<https://police.ufl.edu/>) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website: <https://ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center>

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website (<https://gatorwell.ufsa.ufl.edu/>) or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Harll, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-%20code-student-conduct-code/>

On-Line Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process: <https://distance.ufl.edu/state-authorization-status/#student-complaint>