



New Course

**SPA-202**

**Catalog Course Title:** Politics, Policy and Law Scholars Washington Lab II

**Name and contact information for future correspondence:** Chris Edelson, x6218, edelson@american.edu

**Academic Unit - School/College:**

CAS      KSB      SOC      SIS      X--SPA      SPExS      Other:

**Teaching Unit - Department or Program:** Government/JLC

**Date effective:** spring 2016

Required Signatures	Name	Signature	Date
Teaching Unit Chair or Director	<i>[Handwritten signature]</i> 10/20/15	<i>[Handwritten signature]</i>	9/28/15
EPC Chair	Susan Glover	<i>[Handwritten signature]</i>	10/8/15
Primary Academic Unit Assoc. Dean	Jessica Waters	<i>[Handwritten signature]</i>	10/8/15
Second Academic Unit Assoc. Dean			
Faculty Senate Chair			
Provost's Designee (VPUG or VPGR)			

**Date sent to the Office of the University Registrar:**

**School of Public Affairs**

**New Course: SPA-202 Politics, Policy and Law Scholars Washington Lab II**

- I. Identifying Information
  - a) Proposed effective date  
**Spring 2016**
  - b) Academic Unit  
**SPA**
  - c) Teaching Unit  
**Government/JLC**
  - d) Course Title (Generally a limit of 30 characters including spaces)  
**Politics, Policy and Law Scholars Washington Lab II**
  - e) Course Number  
**SPA-202**
  - f) Credits  
**1.00**
  - g) Prerequisites  
**Admission to Politics, Policy and Law Scholars program and concurrent registration in SPA-220 (PPL-only section).**
  - h) Course description for University Catalog (Generally a limit of 50 words)  
**This course provides an opportunity for PPL Scholars students to (1) make off-site visits to Capitol Hill, advocacy organizations, and other offices, (2) hear from professionals in fields they would like to explore, and (3) develop writing and advocacy skills.**
  - i) Grade type
    - i. **A/F only**
    - ii. Pass/Fail only
    - iii. A /F and Pass/Fail
  - j) Expected frequency of offering i.
    - i. Every Fall
    - ii. **Every Spring**
    - iii. Every Summer
    - iv. Alternate Falls
    - v. Alternate Springs vi. Alternate Summers
    - vii. Every term
    - viii. Irregularly
    - ix. Other
  - k) Note all that apply: **N/A**
    - i. General Education course ii. Online course
    - iii. Hybrid course
    - iv. Rotating topics course
    - v. Individually supervised course, such as Internship, Independent Study, Research Course, Thesis, Dissertation
    - vi. Research Methods course
    - vii. AU Abroad Programs course
    - viii. Other study abroad course (offered directly by Academic Unit, not through AU Abroad)

## II. Rationale

- a) Please explain the main purpose of the new course, including whether it will be a requirement for an existing or proposed program or an elective, and how the new course relates to the existing courses in the program and department. *Note: if the course will be required for an existing program, submit a corresponding Minor Change to Program proposal.*

**This course is required as part of the newly approved PPL certificate program. It has been offered since spring 2014 as a non-recurring/temporary course. We need to make it a permanent course in order to continue offering it. This one credit lab accompanies SPA 220, the required cohort class for first-semester PPL students. It allows one day a week for experiential learning through off site visits e.g. to non-profit organizations, think tanks, and Capitol Hill offices where PPL students can hear from professionals in fields they may like to explore. We also use lab time (a) for guest speakers who come to campus to speak about their career paths (b) for additional class time to complement or discuss in greater detail what is being studied in SPA 220 and (c) for in-class exercises aimed at developing specific skills (e.g. oral advocacy in a moot court exercise).**

- b) Will the course require students to pay a special fee associated with the course? If so, please provide a justification for this additional cost to students.

**No additional fee required.**

- c) Has the course previously been offered under a rotating topics course or an experimental course number? If so: **Yes, offered as SPA-296**

- i. Semesters/year offered

**Spring 2014 and Spring 2015**

- ii. Course number

**SPA-296**

- iii. Instructor

**Barnes (Spring2014)**

**Schwartz (Spring 2015)**

- iv. Enrollment

**18 in Spring 2014**

**29 in Spring 2015**

- v. What observations and conclusions were derived from the previous offering(s) that now lead to proposing this course as a permanent part of the curriculum?

**We always intended for this to be a permanent part of the curriculum—it is an important part of the PPL program that helps supplement classroom learning and helps to bond the class/build a sense of community for PPL students through group activities and off site visits.**

- d) Please indicate other units that offer courses or programs related to the proposed course and provide documentation of consultations with those units.

**N/A**

- e) Estimate the enrollment per semester.

**It will be roughly 25-30 (depending on the size of each year's entering class)**

- f) Does your teaching unit's classroom space allotment support the addition of this course?

**Yes—we typically use a classroom in Ward**

- g) Are present university facilities (library, technology) adequate for the proposed course?

**Yes**

- h) Will the proposed course be taught by full-time or part-time faculty?

**Full-time**

i) Will offering the new course involve any substantial changes to the scheduling of existing courses?

**No**

j) What are the learning outcomes for the course?

**Note: some learning outcomes overlap with SPA 220, which students take at the same time as this lab course**

- (1) Understand how legal arguments under the U.S. Constitution are made and what sources judicial decisions use to reach conclusions**
- (2) Develop writing and oral presentation skills, including through legal memos and a moot court/oral argument exercise**
- (3) Develop critical inquiry and critical thinking skills.**
- (4) Learn about possible career paths in politics, policy and law.**

k) How will those outcomes be assessed?

**There are four assessments: (1) attendance at lab sessions and engagement in discussions with guest speakers and off-campus hosts; (2) a reflection essay in which students apply concepts from SPA 220 to their experience visiting a court; (3) a legal writing exercise that tests skills learned in class, including creating a “theory of the case,” citing and applying precedent, streamlining prose, and answering a judge’s question; and (4) an “effective argument” paper, in which students compare two pieces of judicial writing, identifying and comparing the justices’ argument styles and techniques, offering one justice advice on improving her writing, and examining how their own academic and personal backgrounds, strengths, weaknesses, and preferences inform their opinions about what constitutes persuasive writing.**

l) What are the competencies that students are expected to demonstrate for the course? Please attach a draft syllabus.

**Attached**

### III. Catalog Copy

a) Please attach a course description as it is to appear in the University Catalog, following the format of the current catalog.

#### **SPA-202 Politics, Policy and Law Scholars Washington Lab II**

**(1)**

**This course provides an opportunity for PPL Scholars students to (1) make off-site visits to Capitol Hill, advocacy organizations, and other offices, (2) engage with professionals in litigation, advocacy, communications, and other related PPL fields, and (3) develop research, writing, and oral and written advocacy skills.**

***Prerequisite:* Admission to Politics, Policy and Law Scholars program and concurrent registration in SPA-220 (PPL-only section).**

SPA 202--001  
**PPL Washington Scholars Lab**  
Spring 2016

Prof. Lara Schwartz  
[lschwart@american.edu](mailto:lschwart@american.edu)

Wednesday 10:30am-2:30pm  
Ward 104

Office Hours

Tuesday 10:45-2:45  
MGC 304 (Office is behind door for MGC 305)

Course overview:

This course is a 1 credit lab that is taken in tandem with the PPL section of SPA 220.

This lab course builds upon the fall PPL lab course, which provides an introduction to Washington, DC and to professionals in the politics, policy, and law field. The spring lab focuses on developing the scholars' writing and research skills, complementing the SPA 220 curriculum. In particular, students will learn to frame legal questions and arguments; cite and distinguish relevant case law; craft a persuasive oral argument; critique peers' work; edit and develop their own written work; and analyze judicial writing and compare it to their own writing.

Students will receive advice from legal practitioners and also make off site visits to courts, firms, and other workplaces related to politics, policy, and law.

Course requirements:

Effective argument paper:	30%
Class participation:	35%
Court reflection:	15% <sup>1</sup>
Legal writing exercise:	20%

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	82-86

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<sup>1</sup> Note: PA Quinn Dunlea will work with you to plan your court visits. Your court reflection is due to both Quinn and Professor Schwartz within one week after your court visit.

B-	80-81
C+	78-79
C	71-77
C -	70
D	62-69
F	anything else

There are four assessments: (1) attendance at lab sessions and engagement in discussions with guest speakers and off-campus hosts; (2) a reflection essay in which students apply concepts from SPA 220 to their experience visiting a court; (3) a legal writing exercise that tests skills learned in class, including creating a “theory of the case,” citing and applying precedent, streamlining prose, and answering a judge’s question; and (4) an “effective argument” paper, in which students compare two pieces of judicial writing, identifying and comparing the justices’ argument styles and techniques, offering one justice advice on improving her writing, and examining how their own academic and personal backgrounds, strengths, weaknesses, and preferences inform their opinions about what constitutes persuasive writing.

Attendance and deadlines: Class participation accounts for 35% of the lab grade. Each unexcused absence will result in a deduction of one grade on class participation. You must turn in assignments by the start of class on the due dates. I will deduct a grade per day for unexcused late work. If you know that you will miss a deadline due to illness, you must contact me to request an extension *before* the due date.

Learning Outcomes/Objectives: In this course, students will (a) learn practical applications of legal principles through discussions with practicing lawyers; (b) identify the components of effective, persuasive legal writing; (c) present compelling, persuasive arguments in orally and in writing; and learn the mechanics of legal writing; (e) learn about careers in politics, policy and law.

Academic Integrity: All students are required to follow the University’s Academic Integrity Code. If you have not already done so, please familiarize yourself with the standards and requirements of the University’s Academic Code of Conduct. Violations of the Code of Conduct will not be tolerated and will be reported in accordance with American University policy. Please see me with any questions on the Academic Integrity Code.

### **Additional Information and Resources**

Academic Support Center (x3360, MGC 243) offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, Supplemental Instruction, and services for students with learning disabilities and ADHD. Writing support is available in the ASC Writing Lab or in the Writing Center, Battelle-Tompkins 228.

Counseling Center (x3500, MGC 214) offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus mental health resources.

Disability Support Services (x3315, MGC 206) offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical, medical or psychological disabilities.

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please notify me in a timely manner with a letter from the Academic Support Center or Disability Support Services so that we can make arrangements to address your needs.

### **Assignment groups:**

For several of your assignments you will be assigned a position to argue (e.g. liberal, conservative, libertarian, pro-law enforcement). As set forth in the syllabus below, you'll argue the position assigned to your group. On occasion you will split into two groups for breakout sessions during class.

### Course contents

#### **Wednesday, January 14 – Tour Library of Congress**

##### Assigned reading:

- Review Library of Congress website and find one resource you would like to learn more about. After the tour, you will find the librarian in charge of that resource and learn how to get access to it.
- How to Read a Legal Opinion

#### **Wednesday, January 21— Guided tour of Pentagon and presentation by Lucas Schleusner, speechwriter to the Secretary of Defense, in Pentagon Briefing Room.**

Assigned reading: Department of Defense organization chart.

#### **Wednesday, January 28 – PPL Scholars Monthly Meeting**

#### **Wednesday, February 4—Affordable Care Act implementation discussion at Groom Law Group with partner Seth Perretta.**

Assigned reading: King v. Burwell

#### **Wednesday, February 11—Guest speaker Hannah Groch-Begley of Media Matters for America on critical reading, writing, and research.**

Assigned reading: The Debunking Handbook

#### **Wednesday, February 18: Guest speaker Paul Bland, Executive Director of Public Justice—how to argue before a court of appeal. 10:30am**

##### Assigned reading:

- WATCH: Public Justice's Paul Bland Explains What Media Should Know About Class Actions And The Pro-Business Roberts Court
- Forbes Ignores Consumers, Small Businesses In Unbalanced Coverage Of Pro-Corporate Supreme Court Decision

**LAB Wednesday, February 25— DC Superior Court visit**

Written assignment: Court reflection due March 4.

**Wednesday, March 4: No class.**

**March 7-15: Spring Break**

**Wednesday, March 18: 10:30—Kim Menashe Glassman, special education attorney.**

Assigned reading:

- Attorney Glassman's bio and description of her practice areas
- Current events on disability law TBD.

**Wednesday, March 25: 11am: legal writing exercise with Prof S; 12:30pm: All-PPL get together featuring special guests Gerry and Colleen Sinzduk, former clerks to Supreme Court Justices Roberts and Ginsburg.**

Assigned reading:

- Lucky 36: What It Takes to Land a Supreme Court Clerkship (podcast)

**Wednesday, April 1—Moot court.**

**Wednesday, April 8: MD. Senator Jamie Raskin**

Assigned reading: Complete Overruling Democracy.

**Wednesday, April 15: Legal writing exercise due.**

**Wednesday, April 22: Earth Day guest panel. Jennah Bedrosian of Arcadia Energy; Brad Luna and Kris Eisenla of Luna Eisenla Media**

Other Assignment: Effective argument paper prep.

Submit an excerpt (no more than 750 words) of a Supreme Court decision or dissent that you consider persuasive and well-crafted. The excerpt must come from a constitutional case (not interpreting a federal statute). There is no written assignment due at this time. I will distribute all of the samples on blackboard before our review session on April 28. They will be the basis for your "effective argument" papers, which are due the day of your SPA 220 final exam.

- Group 1: by Roberts, Scalia, Alito, Thomas, or Rehnquist;
- Group 2: by Kagan, Sotomayor, Ginsburg, Stevens, Kennedy, Breyer, or Souter.

Note: the excerpt you choose need not be on a hot-button issue or represent your justice's political leanings.

**Tuesday, May 5: Effective argument paper due.**