**PLSI 370 (Fall 2004)**

**Legal Reasoning (5 units)**
Tuesday & Thursday, 6:00pm – 8:05pm (43459)
Location: DDH, Room 103G

**Instructor: Dr. Dominique Apollon**
Department of Political Science
California State University, Bakersfield
Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays, 2:30pm – 4:30pm, and by appt.
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**Introduction and Course Objectives**

The purpose of this course is to enhance students’ reasoning skills in legal matters, including 1) reading comprehension and analytical thinking; 2) writing and editing; 3) both prepared and reactive verbal communication; and 4) assessment of the relationship of other arts and sciences to various legal questions and disputes. As this course is offered by a department of political science, and not by a law school, students should also develop an understanding and framework for analysis of the intersection of law and politics.

Among other topics, the course readings, lectures, discussions, in-class exercises, and examinations will explore such legal questions and matters as racial segregation, the death penalty, church-state relations, homosexuality, the internet, euthanasia, and terrorism.

The reading load for this upper-division course is dense and challenging. Although there are no prerequisites, students with no prior knowledge of, or exposure to court opinions and processes will likely need to put forth even more effort to perform at above average levels.

**Requirements & Expectations**

Texts: Carter & Burke, *Reason in Law* (2005); Amsterdam & Bruner, *Minding the Law* (2000). Additional **required** readings will be announced in class, and will be placed online and/or distributed in class.

Regular attendance and meaningful participation in class discussions and simulations are critical to your success in this course. Each unexcused absence beyond the first two will result in a two-percentage point deduction from your final course grade. Schedule permitting, late papers will be deducted one-letter grade for each day after the announced due date.
Academic dishonesty (cheating or plagiarism) will not be tolerated, and will at minimum result in a final course grade of “F”. Please review the relevant pages in the university catalogue.

Students with professionally verified disabilities are encouraged to contact the CSUB Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) about procedures for acquiring accommodation for examinations. “Blue Card” forms for accommodation requests will not be accepted less than a week before the relevant midterm or final exam.

**Grading**

20% - Paper #1  
20% - Midterm  
20% - Daily Participation & Class Exercises/Simulations  
40% - Final

**Course Outline**

Part One – Defining Legal Reasoning; Stability & Unpredictability; Legal Categories; Narrative (Sept. 14, 16, 21, 23, 28, 30)  
Carter & Burke, Ch. 1-2; Amsterdam & Bruner, Ch. 1-5

**Paper #1** – Topic distributed Sept. 28 after class (due date/time to be announced)

Part Two – Common Law Reasoning; Statutory Interpretation; Constitutional Law and Rhetorics (Oct. 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21, 26, 28)  
Carter & Burke, Ch. 3-5; Amsterdam & Bruner Ch. 6, 7

**Midterm (take-home)** – Distributed Oct. 26 after class (due date/time to be announced)

Part Three – Class Exercises; Law, Politics, and Culture (Nov. 2, 4, 9, 16, 18, 23)  
Carter & Burke, Ch. 6; Amsterdam & Bruner, Ch. 8, 9, 10

**Final Exam** – Tuesday, November 30, 8:00pm – 10:30pm