

Suggested 36-Week Pacing Guide

American Law I: Foundations of American Law

This course is designed as a 36-week, full-year high school law elective. The pacing guide below provides one suggested sequence. Students may adjust the schedule according to reading speed, discussion time, co-op schedules, and the number of optional extension activities completed.

Unless otherwise indicated, students should complete assigned readings/videos before the corresponding lecture. Optional extensions may be selected according to student interest and available time.

Semester One

Constitutional Structure, Judicial Power & Standing

Week	Topic	Read / Watch	Lecture & Core Work	Optional / Extended Work
1	Constitutional Structure: Articles I–III	Assigned Articles I–III materials; Constitution	Lesson 1 Note-Taking Worksheet; Lecture 1: Articles I–III of the Constitution; Student Notes Worksheet	Additional Constitution study/resources
2	Separation of Powers	Review Articles I–III as needed	Lecture 1.5: Separation of Powers — Theoretical & Historical Background; Guided Notes	Deeper historical/theoretical exploration
3	The Federalist Papers: Factions & Checks and Balances	Federalist Nos. 10 & 51 and assigned supporting resources	Federalist Papers Note-Taking Worksheet; begin Lecture 2	Federalist reflection
4	The Federalist Papers: The Judiciary	Federalist No. 78; review Nos. 10 & 51	Complete Lecture 2: Structure, Power & Protection of Liberty; Socratic Discussion Questions	Extended written response connecting all three papers
5	The Federal Court System	Assigned Lesson 3 court-system resources	The Supreme Court & the Federal Court System Student Worksheet; Lecture 3: How the U.S. Supreme Court Works	Additional court-system exploration
6	Meet the Supreme Court	Assigned materials on the Court and judicial interpretation	Lecture 3A: Meet the Supreme Court; How a Case Moves Through the U.S. Supreme Court; Student Worksheet; Reflection Questions	Explore additional Supreme Court cases or justices
7	Judicial Review: Marbury v. Madison	Assigned Marbury case materials	Lecture 4: Marbury v. Madison (1803); Student Notes Worksheet	Additional case analysis / constitutional interpretation
8	Theories of Criminal Punishment	Assigned Lesson 5 materials	Lecture 5: Theories of Criminal Punishment; Student Worksheet covering retributivism, utilitarianism, hybrid theories and self-defense theory	Final Reflection
9	Justice, Punishment & Just Mercy	Just Mercy Introduction + Chapters 1–2	Pre-Reading Questions; Week 1 Discussion Journal	Additional reflection on theories of punishment
10	Standing & Justiciability: Lujan	Just Mercy Chapters 3–4; assigned Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife materials	Standing/justiciability lesson; Lujan analysis and discussion questions	Deeper standing/case-law exploration
11	Limits on Judicial Power	Just Mercy Chapters 5–6; taxpayer-standing/generalized-grievance materials	Continue standing and justiciability; generalized grievances; separation-of-powers implications	Taxpayer-standing extension
12	Introduction to Legal Writing	Just Mercy Chapters 7–8; sample law-office memorandum/materials	Drafting a Law Office Memorandum; purpose, audience, structure, CRRACC, predictive vs. persuasive writing	Begin optional memo-writing exercise

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13	Federalism: United States v. Lopez	Just Mercy Chapters 9–10; assigned Lopez case materials	Lecture 7: United States v. Lopez (1995); Commerce Clause and federalism analysis	Begin Mini Moot Court preparation
14	Federalism & Oral Advocacy	Just Mercy Chapters 11–12; Mini Moot Court materials	Lopez application; prepare arguments and judicial questions; Mini Moot Court	Optional written brief/mini-memo
15	Personal Jurisdiction: From Pennoyer to Hess	Just Mercy Chapters 13–14; assigned personal-jurisdiction materials	Personal Jurisdiction Guided Notes; Pennoyer v. Neff; Hess v. Pawloski	Additional jurisdiction hypotheticals
16	International Shoe & Minimum Contacts	Just Mercy Chapters 15–16 + Epilogue; International Shoe materials	Lecture 8: Personal Jurisdiction & International Shoe v. Washington; general vs. specific jurisdiction; guided/application work	Additional minimum-contacts analysis
17	The Fourteenth Amendment & Incorporation	Assigned incorporation materials and cases	Incorporation lesson: fundamental fairness, selective incorporation, application of federal rights against the states	Additional incorporation case study
18	Semester Synthesis	Review Semester 1 cases and concepts	Complete unfinished Mini Moot Court/legal-writing work; synthesize Articles I–III, judicial review, standing, federalism, jurisdiction and incorporation; SEMESTER 1 FINAL EXAM	Optional cumulative reflection or written legal analysis

Semester Two

Rights, Due Process & Criminal Procedure

Week	Topic	Read / Watch	Lecture & Core Work	Optional / Extended Work
19	Historical Foundations of American Criminal Justice	No required preparatory work; selected historical sources as desired	Optional Lecture 1: Historical Foundations of American Criminal Justice	Historical Context resources; Constitutional Policing, Institutional Reform & Public Trust; Mini Lectures 1A & 1B
20	Overview of the American Criminal Law System	Assigned Lesson 2 materials	Lesson 2 lecture/guided work: participants and stages of a criminal case; state and federal systems; probable cause, warrants, charging, arraignment, trial and appeal	Additional criminal-procedure exploration
21	Fourth Amendment Foundations	Assigned Fourth Amendment/search-and-seizure materials	Searches, seizures, probable cause, warrants and exceptions; connect constitutional protections to criminal investigation	Search-and-seizure hypotheticals
22	The Exclusionary Rule: Weeks & Mapp	Assigned Weeks v. United States and Mapp v. Ohio materials	Lesson 3 Note-Taking Worksheet; Exclusionary Rule; suppression; reasons for exclusion	Additional case/video resources
23	Fruit of the Poisonous Tree & Exceptions	Assigned follow-up Exclusionary Rule materials	Continue Lesson 3: derivative evidence, deterrence, good-faith issues and application	Extended Exclusionary Rule analysis
24	The Hearsay Rule: FRE 801–802	Assigned Lesson 4 readings/videos	Three-part hearsay test; why hearsay is generally excluded; Guided Notes	Create/analyze additional hearsay hypotheticals
25	Hearsay Exceptions: FRE 801(d), 803–807	Assigned exceptions materials	Prior statements, opposing-party admissions, FRE 803/804/807; application work/assessment	More advanced evidence problems
26	Motions in Limine: Pretrial Evidence	Assigned Lesson 5 materials	Purpose and structure of motions in limine; admissibility and trial strategy	Begin writing assignment
27	Motions in Limine: Legal Writing	Review relevant evidence and case materials	Complete simplified motion to admit or exclude evidence / analysis assignment	Expanded motion or response
28	The Eighth Amendment: Punishment & Proportionality	Assigned Lesson 6 constitutional-law materials	Cruel and unusual punishment; proportionality; evolving standards of decency; capital-punishment doctrine	Additional constitutional case study
29	The Eighth Amendment: Conditions of Confinement	Assigned materials on prison conditions/modern punishment	Conditions of confinement; deliberate indifference; solitary confinement; death-row issues; synthesis with punishment theory	Contemporary prison-conditions research
30	Model Penal Code: Mens Rea & Culpability	Assigned Lesson 7 MPC materials	Purpose of the MPC; criminal responsibility; culpability and mental state; discussion questions	Read portions of the Model Penal Code
31	Insanity, Diminished Capacity & Responsibility	Common Law Press Model Penal Code Case Reader; M'Naghten and assigned materials; Atkins materials	Continue Lesson 7; insanity standards, mental capacity and blameworthiness	UPenn/USD MPC resources; EJI mental-illness materials
32	The Fourteenth Amendment: Due Process	Assigned Lesson 8 materials; Powell v. Alabama	Due Process Clause; incorporation; right to counsel; Guided Notes	Additional due-process case study
33	Equal Protection & Just Mercy	Brown v. Board of Education materials; revisit relevant portions of Just Mercy	Equal Protection Clause; connect Walter McMillian's case to due process/equal protection; Fourteenth Amendment Application Assignment	Optional Honors Challenge
34	Juvenile Justice: Systems, Age & Culpability	Common Law Press Case Studies: Kalief Browder & Ivins Rosier; begin Juvenile Justice Case Reader; assigned supporting resources	Compare juvenile/adult systems; detention, bail, development, responsibility and rehabilitation	Additional juvenile-detention resources

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35	Juvenile Sentencing & the Eighth Amendment	Juvenile Justice Case Reader: Roper v. Simmons, Graham v. Florida, Miller v. Alabama and related materials	Lecture 9: Juvenile Justice: Punishment, Rehabilitation, and Constitutional Fairness; apply Eighth/Fourteenth Amendment and culpability principles	JLWOP readings; review amicus briefs
36	Final Synthesis: What Makes a Legal System Just?	Review major cases, doctrines and written work from both semesters	Cumulative discussion/reflection connecting constitutional structure, government power, criminal procedure, evidence, punishment, due process and juvenile justice; SEMESTER 2 FINAL EXAM	Extended amicus analysis, final essay, presentation, or additional legal-writing assignment