

Guns and the Law
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GUNS AND THE LAW
SYLLABUS AND COURSE POLICIES

Welcome to *Guns and the Law*, a course likely to be one of the most interesting courses you take in law school. Please read all of the below carefully, paying close attention, of course, to your First Assignments.

REQUIRED TEXT:

ANDREW J. MCCLURG & BRANNON P. DENNING, *GUNS AND THE LAW: CASES, PROBLEMS, AND EXPLANATION* (Carolina Academic Press 2016); ISBN: 978-1-61163-538-6.

As the title suggests, the book is a combination of cases, problems and explanation and questions. For each class, you should work through any assigned problems. If a problem is not specifically assigned, you may skip over it.

Most of each class will be spent addressing the questions raised in the “Questions and Explanation” following each case or textual section, so pay particular attention to them in preparing for class.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR FIRST WEEK:

The first chapter (“Introduction”) is vital for processing all that follows. After beginning with a general overview, the chapter is divided into two main sections, addressing, respectively, “The Benefits of Firearms” (to individuals and society) and “The Costs of Firearms” (to individuals and society). Your views on gun rights vis-à-vis gun regulation will likely turn on how you weigh these benefits and costs.

Your assignments for the first week are:

- Read the Preface (pp. xxi–xxii) and pp. 1–29 of Chapter One.
- Work through Problem One (pp. 22–23).
- Conduct the following survey and bring the results to class on a separate sheet of paper with your name on it: Ask three people not in this class to write down their estimates as to: (1) the number of **annual gun homicides** in the United States; (2) the number of **annual gun suicides** in the United States; and (3) the number of **annual fatal gun accidents** in the United States. *Do not give them an opportunity to look up the answers and do not give them ANY hints or other information.* The purpose of the survey to gauge how accurately or inaccurately people perceive the gun issue in America.

Although your survey participants can be law students who are not in the class, it would be nice to get a mix of family members and friends who are not law students. You do not need to identify your survey participants, but rather can list them simply as “Number 1,” “Number 2,” and “Number 3.”

SUBSEQUENT ASSIGNMENTS:

I prefer to allow courses to proceed at their own pace, rather than attempting to fix assignments for the entire semester at the beginning. At each class, I will give you the assignment for the following week. In general, we will be proceeding straight through the casebook, reading roughly thirty to forty pages per week for each two-hour class.

CLASS PREPARATION AND PANEL SYSTEM FOR GETTING CALLED ON:

Because you are 2Ls and 3Ls, for the most part (but not exclusively), Socratic-style cold-calling regarding case analysis will be reserved for an assigned panel of four students for each class, a process we will begin at the third class meeting. *However, all students are expected to be prepared for each class and to participate in the discussion.*

If you are unprepared for class without notifying me in advance, your grade can be lowered one step.

CLASS DISCUSSION:

The issues raised in this course have vital implications for both individuals and society. These issues are “live” (they appear in the news almost daily) and controversial. Divergent opinions are not only welcomed, but necessary to flesh out the issues. *Never* hold back an opinion because of how you think it might be perceived by me or your classmates. You will see in the casebook and in class that I approach “the gun issue” from a pro-reasonable regulation standpoint, but that does not mean you need to agree with me. My casebook co-author, Brannon Denning, is a strong gun-rights advocate, as are many of my closest colleagues in the area nationwide and most students who have enrolled in this course over the years. I recognize both sides of the issues and hope that, through our reading and discussion, you too will keep an open mind.

Quality, consistent class participation can result in a grade bump of one step.

ATTENDANCE:

Because we only meet once a week, regular attendance is necessary. Thus, you are allowed only one “free miss”; that is, one unexcused absence. You are permitted one additional “excused absence,” but only if you notify me by email in advance, giving the reason for the absence. Beyond that, your grade will be lowered one step for each absence. If you miss a total of four or more classes (i.e., eight class hours), you will receive an “F” in the course.

EXAM:

Course grades will be determined by a two-hour exam at the end of the semester. It will consist of essay questions or a combination of essay questions and multiple choice questions. The essay questions may be grounded in policy or doctrinal/statutory law.

DISABILITIES:

If you have a disability entitling you to accommodations, or believe you might, contact the University disability office:

Disability Resources for Students
110 Wilder Tower
Memphis, TN 38152-3520
Phone: 901-678-2880