



RPOL302 –  
Understanding Civil  
Liberties and Rights  
Master Course Syllabus

## Course Overview (QM Standards 1.2)

Welcome to *Understanding Civil Liberties and Rights!*

Course Overview: Americans' knowledge of their civil liberties and civil rights remains limited for multiple reasons. This is unfortunate given the country's founding, which was deeply impacted by the struggle for civil liberties, and due to the civil rights struggle that continues today. Additionally, individuals are often unaware of the full protections—and limitations—of these two sets of rights. As we continue to debate and ponder privacy rights, equal rights protections, religious freedoms, etc., the significance of civil liberties and civil rights is as pertinent as it was at the country's founding. Consequently, this course is designed to facilitate students' understanding of these rights and protections.

Course Description: This course is a survey of the rights afforded to us under the Constitution. Not only will students learn about civil liberties and civil rights, but they also will discuss and consider the historical development and contemporary relevance of these constitutional provisions. For civil liberties, we discuss how the provisions included in the Bill of Rights have evolved over time and we will focus specifically on issues related to free speech, religious rights, criminal protections, gun rights, and privacy rights. For civil rights, the focus will center on issues related to different classes and their struggles for civil rights. Specifically, this will include discussions of African-Americans, women, disabled Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and other groups as it relates to their pursuit of equality in voting, employment, college admissions, and legal standing in various matters (e.g., inheritance law, civil unions, educational funding, etc.).

### Course Goals and Objectives:

- Identify, define, and discuss civil liberties and civil rights.
- Provide examples of civil liberties and civil rights.
- Compare contrast different types of speech and how they are (or are not) restricted.
- Assess the implications for Second Amendment provisions.
- Describe the various criminal rights afforded to Americans through various civil liberties.
- Explain privacy rights.

- Describe and discuss the civil rights struggle for African-Americans.
- Discuss the development and current state of women's rights in America.
- Summarize the recent developments and current state of civil rights for disabled Americans.

### **Pre-Requisites (QM Standard 1.6)**

No pre-requisites are required for this course.

### **Minimum Technical Requirements and Online Resources (QM Standards 1.5 & 1.7)**

In addition to a web browser (preferably Firefox) that is Blackboard compatible, you will need the following software in order to complete the activities in this class:

1. Word processing package capable of reading and creating .doc, .docx or rich text formatted (rtf) documents.
2. *Adobe Acrobat Reader*: If you do not have *Adobe Acrobat Reader*, you can download it free from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>
3. PDF Creator Software: If you are using a MAC or do not have software capable of saving a file as a .doc or .docx file and do not have the capability on your campus to print files to PDF, you can download a free version of *CutePDF* at <http://www.cutepdf.com/Products/CutePDF/writer.asp> This software installs a virtual printer on your PC that allows you to print files to the PDF format.
4. Virus Protection Software: This course requires you to download and upload files from your PC. Virus protection software protects your computer and my computer.

**Online Resources:** This course makes use of many online resources. I have made every effort to make sure the links I have are up-to-date. However, due to the changing nature of the web, you may find that a resource is temporarily unavailable or has been removed. If this should happen, please send me an email and I will find an alternative resource or modify the assignment accordingly.

### **Instructor Information (QM Standards 1.8 & 5.3)**

Individual instructors complete this information.

#### **Virtual Office Hours**

I am available in my virtual office by appointment only. Send me an email to set up an appointment.

#### **Personal Commitment**

My personal commitments to you as a participant include:

I will reply to course mail messages within 24 hours;

I will read all discussion postings and will reply where appropriate within 3 days

I will acknowledge my receipt of every course mail message immediately upon reading it. If I am unable to respond to the request or concern at the time of initial reply, I will give you an estimated time for my next reply.

If I am going to be away from the course space for more than a day or two, I will send a message to you indicating the length of my absence.

I will regularly update information regarding due dates in the course announcements.

### **Optional/Required Course Materials (QM Standard 4.6)**

You will find your required textbook information in the course catalog at <http://ilearn-wvrocks.wvnet.edu>. All other required readings and videos are included in each of the modules.

### **Grading Policy (QM Standard 3.2)**

Each module consists of a series of assignments, discussions and/or quizzes, each having specific point values. For each assignment or discussion you will be given the rubric or grading criteria from which you will be evaluated.

Discussions (8*10 points)	80
Debates (8*10 points)	80
Think Pieces (2*55 points)	110
Reflections (3*10 points)	30
Exams (2*100)	100
<b>Total:</b>	<b>500</b>

Final Letter Grades will be determined as follows:

Total Points Earned	Final Letter Grade
450 - 500	A
400 - 449	B
350 - 399	C
300 - 349	D
Below 300	F

### **Module Objectives and Assessments (QM Standard 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.4, 3.5, 5.1)**

#### **Module 1**

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Identify and define civil liberties.** [M1S1: Self-assessment, M1A1: Civil Liberties and Rights Discussion]
- **Identify and define civil rights.** [M1S1: Self-assessment, M1A1: Civil Liberties and Rights Discussion]
- **Discuss the role of civil liberties and civil rights as it applies to our lives.** [M1A1: Civil Liberties and Rights Discussion]
- **Compare and contrast the general differences between civil liberties and civil rights.** [M1A1: Civil Liberties and Rights Discussion, M1A2: Civil Liberties and Rights Debate]
- **Give three examples of civil liberties and three examples of civil rights.** [M1A1: Civil Liberties and Rights Discussion, M1A2: Civil Liberties and Rights Debate]
- **Explain the importance of the Equal Protection clause as it relates to civil liberties and civil rights.** [M1A1: Civil Liberties and Rights Discussion, M1A2: Civil Liberties and Rights Debate]

## Module 2

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Explain the basis and constitutional foundation for freedom of speech.** [M2A1: Freedom of Speech Discussion]
- **Identify five different types of speech.** [M2S1: Self-assessment, M2A2: Freedom of Speech Debate]
- **Compare and contrast different speech types and discuss which ones are more heavily regulated/restricted.** [M2A3: Freedom of Speech Video Summary]

## Module 3

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Summarize the key tenets of the Second Amendment.** [M3A1: Second Amendment Discussion]
- **Identify five (5) key developments in the Second Amendment rights over time.** [M3S1: Self-assessment, M3A1: Second Amendment Discussion]
- **Explain what limitations—if any—the Supreme Court has authorized with respect to this amendment.** [M3A2: Second Amendment Debate]

## Module 4

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **List the key constitutional amendments that supply civil liberties related to criminal procedures.** [M4S1: Self-assessment, M4A1: Criminal Rights Discussion]
- **Compare and contrast the Supreme Court’s decisions in *Furman v. Georgia* and *Gregg v. Georgia*.** [M4A2: Criminal Rights Debate]

- **Categorize and explain at least three other criminal procedural rights. [M4A3: Criminal Rights Video Reflection]**

## **Module 5**

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Define privacy rights and what substantive areas they apply to today. [M5S1: Self-assessment, M5A1: Privacy Rights Discussion]**
- **Explain the development of privacy rights through at least three different Supreme Court decisions. [M5A1: Privacy Rights Discussion, M5A2: Privacy Rights Debate, M5A3: Right to Privacy Reflection, M5A4: Think Piece #1]**

## **Module 6**

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Describe the impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on African-Americans' rights. [M6S1: Self-assessment, M6A1: Fourteenth Amendment and African-American Rights Discussion]**
- **Explain the significance of the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. [M6A1: Fourteenth Amendment and African-American Rights Discussion]**
- **Compare and contrast the consequences of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. [M6A2: Voting and Civil Rights Debate, M6A3: Exam 1]**

## **Module 7**

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Define women's suffrage. [M7S1: Self-assessment, M7A1: Women's Rights Discussion]**
- **Discuss how women's suffrage and women's rights have developed during the 20th century. [M7A1: Women's Rights Discussion]**
- **Discuss the importance of legislation such as the Ledbetter Act and Title IX as well as the importance of *Roe v Wade* and *Reed v Reed* for women's rights. [M7A2: Women's Rights Legislation Debate, Think Piece #2]**

## **Module 8**

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Discuss the key tenets and implications of the ADA. [M8S1: Self-assessment, M8A1: ADA Discussion]**
- **Review the development of disabled Americans' civil rights. [M8A2: ADA Debate, M8A3: Exam 2]**
- **Explain the challenges facing disabled Americans today. [M8A2: ADA Debate]**

