

Writing Assignment Paper Topics and Due Dates
for PLS 2170 Judicial Process and Behavior Fall 2011

1. Chapter 3, pages 83-84. "Are the Federal Courts Obstructing the War on Terrorism, or Are They Protecting Civil Liberties?" Read this article for background information. "What do you think? Are the federal courts unnecessarily obstructing the War on Terrorism by preventing government action to protect our security? Or are federal courts properly protecting the civil liberties of citizens and noncitizens alike?"

In other words, what role should the federal courts (and in particular, the US Supreme Court) play in the War on Terror, given that their decisions could impact executive branch policy? Explain your reasoning. **Due Sept 27th.**

2. Chapter 6, pages 191-193. Sonia Sotomayor is the first Latina justice on the Supreme Court. She and newly appointed Justice Elena Kagan bring the total number of women currently serving on the Court to 3 (or 1/3 the makeup of the Court). Currently, there are no Protestants on the Court (six justices are Roman Catholic, three are Jewish). In your opinion, how much should someone's race, gender or religion be considered in selecting nominees to the Supreme Court? How important is it to have "diversity" on the Court? Explain your reasoning. **Due October 18th.**

3. Chapter 9, page 295 and Chapter 13, page 420. In February 2010, Gregory Taylor was freed from a North Carolina prison after serving 16 years for a murder he did not commit. Taylor was freed by order of a three judge panel, who reviewed the case after it was presented to them by the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission (NCIIC). Explain what the commission is, and why it was established. Do you think the problem of innocent people in prison (including death row) is great enough that every state should establish a committee similar to the NCIIC? Explain your reasoning. **Due November 3.**

4. Chapter 12, pages 393-394. In July 2011, a Florida jury declined to convict Casey Anthony in the death of her daughter, Caylee. Prior to trial the case received a great deal of pre-trial publicity (pg. 395-397). The trial and verdict were broadcast live on TV. A number of people were shocked and outraged by the verdict; some of the jurors were threatened after the trial was over. Given the public's reaction to this case and verdict, do you think citizens will be more reluctant to serve on a jury in high profile cases in the future? In your opinion, do you think it will be more difficult for a high profile defendant to receive a fair trial now than before the Casey Anthony case? Explain your reasoning. **Due November 22.**