



INSTITUTO UNIVERSITARIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN  
EN ESTUDIOS NORTEAMERICANOS  
"BENJAMIN FRANKLIN"

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| <b>Course</b>                           | A Comparative Look at Courts Around the World |
| <b>Program, semester, year</b>          | International Studies Program, Spring, 2025   |
| <b>Credits ECTS</b>                     | 3 USA   |
| <b>Instructor's full name and email</b> | Gale Iles                                     |
| <b>Block dates (days and time)</b>      | Monday-Thursday, 9am-12pm                     |
| <b>Classroom</b>                        | TBA   |
| <b>Class hours</b>                      | 45  |
| <b>Office Hours</b>                     |   |
| <b>Requirements</b>                     |   |
| <b>Language of instruction</b>          | English                                       |
| <b>Type of teaching</b>                 | In person                                     |

## INTRODUCTION

Using Spain and the United States as model countries, this course will explore the similarities and differences of court systems around the world. Special attention will be devoted to legal traditions, structure and functions of courts, actors in the courtroom, the rights of the accused, criminal procedures, and a critical analysis of the concept of "justice" in sentencing decisions. Court visits, guest speakers, and videos will be used to supplement student learning.

## COMPETENCES

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Discuss the importance of studying the legal systems of other countries
2. Compare and contrast the structure and functions of courts around the world
3. Identify the legal actors commonly found in the courtroom and explain their role/duties
4. Appraise the variation in the rights of the accused across countries
5. Explore how criminal procedures are similar and/or different from country to country
6. Debate the complexities involve in seeking fairness and justice in sentencing

## METHODOLOGY

The course is designed to be highly interactive and will take students on a virtual trip to a country of their own choosing. While embarked on their virtual journey, students are expected to use course materials (e.g., assigned readings; lectures) as a roadmap for the type of information they should gather about their adopted country. Class discussions will entail spirited conversations of how the court systems in their adopted country is different and/or similar to that of Spain, the United States, and the system in the adopted countries of their peers. Class time will also serve as a venue for students to share other court-related facts or newsworthy events occurring in their adopted country.

## PREPARATION FOR CLASS

Prior to coming to class students are expected to:

- Complete all assigned readings.
- Research their adopted country to gather information about their court. The type of information gathered should be based on the topic covered in the assigned readings for that day.
- Students should be prepared to discuss the assigned readings and apply it to their adopted country.

## EVALUATION

Students will be evaluated based on the following criterion:

1. A PowerPoint presentation of their adopted country (40%)
  - a. The presentation should include:
    - i. A profile of the country (e.g., its people, government, crime statistics)
    - ii. The legal tradition used in the country

- iii. Court structure, types of courts and their function
  - iv. Legal actors role/duties
  - v. Rights of the accused
  - vi. Steps to processing the accused
  - vii. Type of sentencing structure and sentencing options available
  - viii. Closing commentary on the strengths and/or weaknesses of their country's court system compared to that of Spain, the United States, or the adopted country of another student.
2. Weekly Quizzes (25%)
    - a. Weekly quizzes will assess students' comprehension of the course material. They are given in class and will consist of multiple choice/true & false questions and essay questions.
  3. In-class activities (20%)
    - a. These application-based activities are designed to give students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the course material.
  4. Class Participation (15%)
    - a. Since students are expected to learn from each other, class participation is mandatory. Therefore, attendance will be taken, and students' course grade will be impacted by their class participation. Recipients of "high" participation points (e.g., 10 points) will be those students who are attentive in class, ask relevant questions, make comments, and answer questions posed by the instructor and other students. Their attitudes will show interest and they are actively taking notes. Students who earn low participation points are those who seem bored or uninterested, don't ask questions, don't make comments and almost never participate in debates, discussions or answer questions posed by the instructor or other students.

## EVALUATION

The evaluation of this course is as follows:

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| <b>A PowerPoint presentation</b> | 40% |
| <b>Weekly Quizzes</b>            | 25% |
| <b>In-class activities</b>       | 20% |

**Class Participation**

15%

**Grading Scale**

|              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 93% - 100% A | 73% - 76% C     |
| 90% - 92% A- | 70% - 72% C-    |
| 87% - 89% B+ | 67% - 69% D+    |
| 83% - 86% B  | 63% - 66% D     |
| 80% - 82% B- | 60% - 62% D-    |
| 77% - 79% C+ | Less than 60% F |

**PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is a violation of academic norms and as such it can result in a failed course. In extreme cases it can include the expulsion from the program. In order to avoid this, it is recommended to remind students of how to cite and rephrase the works of authors when writing papers.

**ATTENDANCE (Instituto Franklin-UAH Policy)**

Attendance is mandatory. Students are not permitted to miss any classes of the program without proper justification (i.e. emergencies, health problems, in this case students have to show a medical note). The following types of excuses are not justified: family visits, illnesses without a medical note, personal trips, etc. Each unjustified absence will result in a grade deduction of 10 points in the final grade of the class (example: from A to B). Students will not be allowed, in the classroom or fieldtrips, to arrive 10 minutes late or more. If a student has continual delays, he/she will be penalized with an absence and the instructor may not allow them into class or the visit.

**STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (Instituto Franklin-UAH Policy)**

Students with special needs should contact Antonio Fernández: [antonio.fernandezm@uah.es](mailto:antonio.fernandezm@uah.es)  
Instituto Franklin-UAH can accommodate these students who show through a medical note or a note from their academic advisor that require help in order to fulfill the program.

**USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN CLASS**

Given the design of the course, students are encouraged to bring their laptop or other internet access devices to class. However, the use of those devices during class should be limited solely to in-class activities and when asked to do so by the instructor.

## BIBLIOGRAHY

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## INSTRUCTOR



Dr. Gale Iles is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga. She joined the department in 2006 after earning her doctorate in Criminal Justice from the University of Nebraska-Omaha and a Master's degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Washington-Seattle, where she double majored in Law & Society and Sociology and minored in Political Science.

Dr. Iles teaches both graduate and undergraduate courses on the American Courts, Criminological Theory, Minorities and the Criminal Justice System, and Comparative Criminal Justice Systems. Her research interests lies in sentencing practices, particularly the identification and examination of unwarranted sentencing disparities, the effects of population shifts on prison rates, and the explanation of crime and deviant behavior. She has also done work in the area of cross-national crime and delinquency and has traveled extensively to over three-dozen countries throughout North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Middle East.

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