American Jurisprudence Final Project Assignment

(In lieu of Final Exam)

Either alone or with ONE partner you will research an issue interesting and/or important to you concerning the law. You will create over the course of the school year a portfolio of sources, writings, and other documents that explains the issue that you have chosen, what the different sides of the issues are and which side has been adopted by the Courts or government including the reasons for that choice, how the Courts or other government institutions have decided and implemented the issue into our system of government, real life examples of the issue in our lives, and your opinion (supported by reasons, evidence, and sources) as to how the issues should be decided and employed in our society (what is right and wrong about the way we do so now and what changes need to be made and why they should be made).

Your grade will be based on the portfolio of materials you create identified below as well as a presentation to class of the issue.

You will be assigned a topic. HOWEVER, you will complete the FINAL PROJECT CHOICE SHEET and list your top 3 choices from the following topics or create one of your own. If you create one of your own, you must be specific as to the issue that you will research and present and the questions related to the issue that you plan to discuss and evaluate in your portfolio and presentation.

**TOPICS**

1. Right to Privacy in school settings—4th Amendment
2. Search and Seizure—4th Amendment
3. Privacy and your cell phone—4th amendment
4. Automobile Searches—4th Amendment
5. Miranda Rights—5th and 6th Amendment
6. Grand Juries—5th Amendment
7. Racial Profiling in investigation of criminal cases.
8. Treatment of juveniles as adults in the criminal justice system.
9. Incarceration for non-violent crimes
10. Overcrowding of prisons
11. Racism in criminal justice system (issues relating to prosecution, trial, and punishment)
12. Racism in the correctional system (issues relating to incarceration and parole)
13. Racism in the jury system (issues relating to jury selection and jury decisions)
14. The Death Penalty—8th Amendment
15. The economic issues related to Bail—8th Amendment
16. Relationship between Federal and State Court system (Federalism)
17. Gun Control—2nd Amendment
18. Legalization of Marijuana—arguments for and against it, whether it is federal or state issue, how the federal courts and Congress, and the state courts and legislatures have dealt with the issue
19. Civil Juries—7th Amendment
20. Court determination of Child Custody
21. Family law—how should assets be split between spouses and what factors should be considered.
22. Child Custody—what do and what should Court consider in determining the “best interest of the child”
23. How should the Family Court strike a balance between the rights and Child and the Parent (PINS and Child Protection Service)
24. Gay Marriage—should there be a constitutional amendment, should the federal government be involved, what amendments are at issue, how have the states handled the issue.
25. Tort Reform law
26. Should Plaintiffs be entitled to payment of punitive damages—what are punitive damages what is the standard for awarding, should they be awarded, and to whom should such awards be awarded.
27. Compensation of Wrongfully convicted persons.
QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT FOR YOUR PROJECT
(not all of the questions are applicable to each topic)

a. What are the underlying facts and holdings in the landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases?
b. What were the reasons provided to support the Court’s holding?
c. Was there a dissenting opinion and if so, what were the reasons for their dissent?
d. What language in the applicable Constitutional Amendment does the U.S. Supreme Court rely on for its opinion?
e. Has New York Courts given more rights than provided by the U.S. Supreme Court?
f. What is the “test” set up by the U.S. Supreme Court and/or New York Court of Appeals for determining how to decide cases relating to the particular issue?
g. How are the rights being applied by the Courts AND by other government entities (police, school, and other government officials) themselves? (LOOK AT CURRENT EVENTS)
h. What is your opinion on how the Courts interpret the rights at issue? BE SURE TO EXPLAIN YOUR OPINION—cite sources and facts to support your opinion.
i. What is your opinion on how the courts, schools, and other government agencies (police ect.) are applying the rules today? BE SURE TO EXPLAIN YOUR OPINION—cite sources and facts to support your opinion.
j. What modifications to the way the rights are applied would you make? In other words, what additional rights should be given (or what rights should be taken away)? BE SURE TO EXPLAIN WHY—include examples either from real life events or realistic hypotheticals. IF YOU DO NOT BELIEVE THEIR SHOULD BE ANY MODIFICATIONS, explain why including what some modifications might be and why those possible modifications are not beneficial to society.

YOUR ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING

1. A cover page with title and name
2. An introduction page which sets for the Issue that is the subject of your portfolio and the essential question or questions that will be discussed/answered in your presentation.
3. A written analysis of the important Courts cases on the issues of the project. (At least one U.S. Supreme Court case and one New York Court of Appeals (if available) and a total of 4 cases. (see Case Analysis sheet)
4. A written explanation of how the rights involved have been applied by the Courts. (USE CURRENT EVENTS-include a copy of an article of the current events discussed)
5. A written explanation of how the rights involved have been applied by other government officials (USE CURRENT EVENTS-include a copy of an article of the current events discussed)
6. Visuals of the issue when it was first discussed in the Courts AND from current events.
7. An artistic representation of the rights involved. (It can be a drawing, song lyrics, poem or script for a skit- preferably with a video presentation)
8. A persuasive essay which states the Courts’ views of the issue and your opinion on how the Courts interpret these issues, how they are applied by the government (federal and state), and what modifications you believe are necessary to either the Courts’ “test” and interpretation of the rights, or the way the rights are applied by the government. (Essentially this essay will answer the questions h, i and j above. (see Essay Rubric)
9. A visual representation of your opinion discussed in your essay (It can be a drawing, song lyrics, poem or script for a skit-preferably with a video presentation)
10. Presentation which you will present to the class which should explain the issue you research, the important court cases and their holdings both at the federal and New York state level, how the rights are applied, how the rights have been applied or come up in our lives (current events), and how you believe the rights should change in the future. (see Presentation Rubric)