COURSE NAME: Seminar: The Supreme Court

COURSE NUMBER: 8881

PROFESSOR: Edward Cantu

ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITES: Constitutional Law I

DESIRABLE PREREQUISITES: Civil Procedure II

COURSE BOOKS: None

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF COURSE:

In this 2-hour seminar, students will simulate the work of the U.S. Supreme Court justices “in conference,” wherein the justices discuss and debate how to decide various cases pending before the Court. Students will also write opinions disposing of the various cases discussed during the semester.

Enrollment in the seminar will be limited to nine students. In light of this, and because the course has historically been quite popular, students wishing to enroll should, as the earliest possible date, email Professor Cantu with an expression of interest and attach a resume.

COURSE CONTENT:

The Chief Justice (professor) will choose the cases that the justices must “adjudicate” during the semester. Students will, for a given week’s case—and prior to the class corresponding to a given case—thoroughly review the relevant lower court opinion(s), read all relevant precedent, and conduct any further reading the Chief Justice deems necessary to an informed discussion of the various policy, theoretical, and doctrinal issues implicated.

The justices will then meet “in conference” (weekly classes) to debate, rigorously dissect, and vote on each case. Each student will be expected to draft during the semester one opinion for the Court disposing of a case discussed during the semester.

Note on Attendance: The educational value of this course depends on the participation of every student justice. Except for extremely good cause, students will be expected to be present at—and fully prepared for—every conference.

METHOD OF GRADING:

A student’s grade for the course will be based on, in no particular order, (1) the analytical and technical quality of the student’s written opinion for the Court, (2) the quality of the student’s contribution to in-conference discussions; and (3) the student’s attendance.

RELEVANCY OF COURSE FOR CAREER PURPOSES:
Aside from being fun and intellectually stimulating, the course will help prepare students to “think like judges,” which will translate into a sensitivity to those types of arguments likely to persuade the judges before whom students will someday practice.

COURSE OUTCOMES:

The course will help hone students’ reasoning, articulation, and writing skills.