

Hello everyone,

Welcome to OLLI 180, Today's Supreme Court: A Class for Citizens. I'm glad so many folks continue to be interested in this subject and hope that we will all learn a lot during the time we are together. There is probably no more important period in our history for us to be participating in a "class for citizens" that focuses on this critical institution.

The purpose of this email is fourfold:

First, I am affirming that **this class begins on Tuesday, March 5 at 1:45**. I believe we will be meeting in classroom 5 but the meeting place will be clearly marked on the notice-board as you enter the building.

Second, I want to confirm the titles of the two books that I recommend. They are *The US Supreme Court: A Very Short Introduction*, by Linda Greenhouse and *The Oath: The Obama White House and the Supreme Court*, by Jeffery Toobin. The Greenhouse book is a classic – 97 pages that contain almost everything you need to know to be basically informed on this topic. The third edition was released in 2023 and is quite up to date. The Toobin book covers the first six years of the Robert's court and introduces us to all the justices who have served on that court, other than the three Trump justices and Ketanji Brown Jackson. He also covers seven of the dozen or so major cases (or series of cases) that are considered to be the blockbusters - decisions that have fundamentally changed the direction of the country. It is my job to expand on these books and present the major cases and events that have followed since they were published, along with explaining the basic operational and philosophical background issues on the Court.

Third, a word about content. The class is "content heavy" because, as concerned citizens, there is much we need to know about this institution – its procedural norms and philosophies, its history on critical areas that impact our lives, its trends over the last 18 years, and its evolving personnel and powers. You will receive copies of my slides in written form the evening before each class so that you can print them out and take additional notes if you wish. These slides are essentially the text of the class. Hopefully, they and the recommended books will bring you up to date on the Roberts Court's impact on the seven subject areas we will cover: presidential power, race (affirmative action and voting rights), elections (money and voter suppression), guns, environment (climate change and de-regulation), health care, and religion. As you will see in the attached **syllabus**, there are reading suggestions in both books for the class meetings. Of course, we'll all be monitoring the media on what's happening at the court during our time together and discussing major issues as they emerge. An extensive **bibliography** is attached to this email for those who want to dig deeper.

Finally, I would appreciate it if you could send me a return email briefly touching on the four points below (I'll model the response I'm seeking). I'm particularly interested in the last point – a one word description of the Court as you now perceive it.

Name: My name is Penny Hansen.

Background: I am a 4th generation Washingtonian and spent most of my 40 year professional life implementing new programs at the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Motivation: I took this course because I think it's important for citizens, particularly those with no legal background, to understand how the Supreme operates and what it has been deciding during the Roberts years.

Impression: Knowing what I know now, I would describe the Supreme Court in one word as – **POWERFUL**.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email or call me. My contact information is on the bottom of the Syllabus and this email. I look forward to meeting you in person.

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