This course will consider the vital roles of evidence-based fact finding and science in justice, law and policy. Science plays a key role in policy-making, legislation, regulation and court decisions. Science is also a vital part of the justice system in connection with providing evidence that establishes guilt and innocence, or proving discrimination or other injustices. The course will examine four subjects of contemporary policy-making relating to justice and the law: education, sexual assault, juvenile justice and climate change. The course will analyze how legislation, regulation, and litigation involve science and evidence to define issues, attempt to provide solutions, and shape public and political debate.

The goal of the course is to engage students to consider the involvement of multiple disciplines in defining, enforcing and protecting rights in our society, and to understand and appreciate the role that science has in connection with justice. Students should be prepared to grapple with how to weigh conflicting scientific determinations and factual conclusions.

**Course Calendar**

**Week 1 (March 30)** Introduction to the justice system; getting reliable and trustworthy information; the pursuit of truth; probing and questioning: (1) Overview of the legal system, definitions, what is policy, how policy and law are made, the court system and judicial decision making, the roles of legislators, voters, courts, counsel and experts; (2) what is reliable information? How to seek information; sources of information; how to ask questions.

**Weeks 2 and 3 (April 5 and 12)** Environmental protection and climate change: Environmental regulation and protection, including governmental and private enforcement; using science to prove violations of law and obtain adequate remedies; examination of climate change advocacy and policy-making.

**Weeks 4 and 5 (April 19 and 26)** Education: Access to education and adequacy of education as a right, and how science is used to consider these issues and develop policy and in litigation; developing curriculums and challenges to curriculums.

**Weeks 6 and 7 (May 3 and 10)** Police-Community Relations: When should police officers be allowed to use force when detaining and/or arresting community members; to what extent should we be concerned that officers may treat certain segments of the community unfairly; current policies in policing and advocacy for reform; bases for challenges and theories of new policies.

**Weeks 8 and 9 (May 17 and 24)** Sexual assault policy: Defining the problems, and evidence supporting the definitions; need for reform? What new policies are appropriate? What
evidence supports the policy proposals. **Note: Group 4 will present to the class on Wednesday, May 27.**

**Week 10 (May 31)** Class presentations for Groups 1-3 on June 1, and review session for final examination on June 3.

**Final Paper: Due June 4 at 10:00 p.m.**

**Final Examination: Take home examination: will be posted on Wednesday, June 3rd at 9:00 pm and due on Saturday, June 6th at 10:00 p.m.**

**Course expectations:**

The course is offered for 5 units and meets Monday and Wednesday nights, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. There will also be a weekly discussion section beginning the second week of classes; the meeting time for section will be decided during the first week of the quarter.

Students are expected to have done the weekly readings and participate in class discussion. To that end, two prompts will be distributed – one after week 3 and the other after week 6 – that will require students to engage with selected readings from class. A research paper of approximately 15 pages is due on June 4. This is a firm deadline; extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Research for this paper must include interviews with at least three persons who are experts or involved in the subject matter of the paper. Further guidelines regarding the paper will be distributed at a later date. However, every student is required to meet with Professor Abrams or Jimmy Threatt by Monday, April 20th to discuss prospective research topics. Students will also be required to present group projects in Week 10. The research requirements for the group projects will be similar to those of the research papers. The final examination is a take-home exam; students will be allowed to consult any course materials and their notes, though they will not be allowed to use any other sources, including the internet. Old exams will be posted to give students a sense of what to expect on the exam.

The research paper and the final exam will each constitute 35% of the grade, the group project will be 15% of the grade, and class participation and the prompts together will comprise 15%.

There will be several guest speakers during the quarter. Students are expected to actively participate in those sessions and ask the speakers challenging questions.

Students are not allowed to use laptops during class meetings. Student with accommodations should contact Professor Abrams or Jimmy during the first week of class.

**Readings:**

Readings will be posted on Coursework approximately two weeks before the materials will be discussed.
The only book students must purchase for the course is *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White. It is available at the Stanford Bookstore and on various online retailers, including Amazon.

**Office Hours:**
My office hours are Sundays from 4:00 - 5:30 p.m., Building 20, Room 22J, and before class on Mondays from 5 to 6:30 p.m. I will add OH as the quarter proceeds and will be available by appointment.

**Contact Information:**
[Contact Information](mailto:contact_info@stanford.edu)
650-269-7779

**Teaching Assistant:**
Jimmy Threatt
[jimmyt@stanford.edu](mailto:jimmyt@stanford.edu)

Jimmy will hold office hours on Sundays from 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. and will be available after class sessions to answer any questions students may have. He is also available by appointment.