

Course Description  
**INTRODUCTION INTO THE US CONSTITUTION'S FIRST AMENDMENT**

*Lessons per semester:* approx. 3 week-long course, altogether 8x3 lecture hours

*Exam:* written referral

*Language:* English

*Lecturer:* Prof. Russell L. Weaver (University of Louisville) & Dr. András Koltay

*Pre-study obligation:* none

*Parallel study obligation:* none

The aim of this course is to introduce the basics of US First Amendment law (freedom of expression and freedom of religion) to the students. It mainly targets regular Hungarian students and students from the ERASMUS program. The course is part of the planned "US law" training.

**OUTLINE OF THE COURSE:**

- Introduction: freedom of expression in Europe and in the US
- The U.S. Constitutional System (an examination of how the U.S. Constitution was drafted at a time when the Divine Right of Kings was on decline, and enlightenment was in full bloom. This discussion will also bring in the U.S. Declaration of Independence, and examine its importance and significance, American attitudes towards government, and the drafter's efforts to limit and control the power of government)
- The Philosophical Underpinnings of Free Expression (discussion of competing governmental theories, their attitudes towards free expression, and their attempts at speech suppression, followed by a discussion of modern justifications for giving speech a preferred status)
- The Limits of Free Expression (absolutism versus relativism, advocacy of illegal action)
- Speech Categories (a comparative examination of how different societies handle different categories of speech: defamation; commercial speech; speech that degrades human dignity, speech that inflicts mental and emotional distress, fighting words, obscenity)
- The Internet, Advances in Speech Technology & Free Expression
- Freedom of Religion and the Prohibition Against the Establishment of Religion

**RECOMMENDED READING:**

Russell L. Weaver: *Understanding the First Amendment*. LexisNexis, 2017 (6th edition, forthcoming)

OR

Russell L. Weaver: *Understanding the First Amendment*. LexisNexis, 2014 (5th edition)

Budapest – Louisville, November 11, 2016.

Prof. Russell L. Weaver – Dr. Koltay András s. k.