

Chapter 16: The Courts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

1. Explain why the American judicial system is called an *adversarial* system.
2. Identify the major actors in the judicial system and explain their functions and responsibilities.
3. Describe the functions of federal district courts, courts of appeals, and the U.S. Supreme Court.
4. Summarize judicial selection procedures for federal judges and justices.
5. Discuss the backgrounds of judges and justices.
6. Describe the role of the courts as *policymakers*.
7. Summarize procedure in the U.S. Supreme Court, including the "discuss list," oral argument, the conference, and opinion writing.
8. Explain the importance of opinion writing at the Supreme Court level and describe the different types of opinions.
9. Identify factors used by the Supreme Court in deciding which cases to accept for review.
10. Analyze the contrasting positions of *judicial restraint* and *judicial activism*.
11. Trace the historical evolution of the policy agenda of the Supreme Court.
12. Examine the ways in which American courts are both democratic and undemocratic institutions.