

**Secured Transactions,
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**Fall 2017
Room 1
Tuesday, 2:00 pm to 4:30 pm**

Syllabus

Course Goals

Secured Transactions is about what happens when D owes C money, and C has the right to seize D's property in repayment of the debt. Sometimes D and C have created this right through contract, and other times C has this right through operation of law. Lots of times, C will have to fight other claimants to the property because C's rights will only be salient when D has failed to repay the debt. When that happens, D is often in default on other obligations. As you will learn, the course has two major parts: C's rights against D and C's rights against the rest of the world.

The Ds and Cs of the world are both individuals and large corporations. The course will cover automobile loans to a consumer and multibillion dollar accounts receivable financing. As of late, the D's of the world have had trouble paying the Cs of the world, and secured lending has moved to center stage in the news. For example, secured lenders of both Chrysler and General Motors objected to the government-sponsored reorganization of those companies. The debate about those reorganizations rested largely on the rights of the secured lenders, rights we will discuss in this course.

Traditionally, this course is one of the bread-and-butter commercial law courses in the curriculum. In recent years, it has been part of the omnibus course in commercial law, but the topic merits separate attention. The course travels under the name "Secured Transactions" but that was just to use conventional terms in the course listings. The name of the textbook—*Secured Credit*— reflects an intent to cover a broader array of material than what used to be thought of as a Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) course. Certainly, Article 9 of the UCC will play a central role in our studies, but we will study secured transactions as part of a lending system and will cover all sorts of transactions. Also, we will not pretend that commercial law and bankruptcy law are separate things. In practice, a lender's legal rights often only become important during financial distress, and if one wants to know the practical consequences of the lender's power one must know the results in bankruptcy court.

I also strongly believe in two ideas that the casebook authors state. They do such a good job explaining these ideas that I will just repeat their words. The first idea is more of a jurisprudential point that comes from their teaching notes:

We readily confess to being dyed-in-the-wool Legal Realists, who see law not as a "brooding omnipresence in the sky" but as "what officials do about disputes." We are more interested in the empirical reality of secured credit than myths perpetuated by armchair theorists. To our mind, secured credit *is* what secured credit *does*.

The second idea is more of a pedagogical point and comes from their Introduction:

We have written this book with an attitude. Legal education has a way of taking simple things and making them seem complex. In this book we have made every effort to do the opposite—to make this complex, technical subject as simple as possible. This is a course for second- and third-year students who have already mastered reading cases. The threshold intellectual task here is to read statutes; the ultimate intellectual task is to learn how law functions together with other elements as a law-related system.

You will find this course to stress both of these ideas.

Required Reading

The required textbook is LYNN M. LOPUCKI & ELIZABETH WARREN, SECURED CREDIT: A SYSTEMS APPROACH (Aspen, 7th ed. 2012). Please note that we are not using the recently released 8th edition. At this point, I do not think that the updates between the editions justify the additional cost of the new edition. (The 7th edition can be found used for around \$10; the 8th edition costs around \$170 new). Please note the errata sheet posted to the course website. For example, in problem 3.1, the reference to 9-102(a)(72) and (73) should be (73) and (74).

Reading statutes is **essential** to your success in this class. I recommend the statutory supplement that goes with this textbook: ELIZABETH WARREN, BANKRUPTCY AND ARTICLE 9: STATUTORY SUPPLEMENT. It has the most recent versions of the statutes we will discuss.

A free online version of the U.C.C. is available, along with links to different states' versions of the U.C.C. <http://www.law.cornell.edu/ucc/ucc.table.html/> However, free online resources may be out of date or contain errors, and may not have the official comments. Electronic versions should also be available online through Lexis, and can be downloaded or printed.

[The ABA model rules of professional conduct](#) may be helpful to refer to for problems that call for you to step into the shoes of a lawyer advising clients.

Please be sure to bring a print copy or printout of the statutes to the exam.

Course Work & Grading

Your grade in the class will be based on an open book final examination and two graded assignments, discussed below. Each assignment will be worth one multiple choice question on the exam. The remainder of your grade will be based on the exam.

It is absolutely essential that you attempt to complete the assigned problems before every class, and review the problems after class. The problems are the primary method through which you will learn the material. This course relies on the problem method. You learn by reading about the system, seeing the material applied in various situations in the text, and then applying the material in new situations as you work the problems. For the problem method to work, you must be an active participant. Reading the solutions to the problems from the notes of former students will prepare you neither for the final exam nor for practice and may interfere with class discussions. You may work on problem sets in groups with other students in the class. You may not look at outlines from former students showing the answers to the problems until after we have discussed those problems in class.

I encourage you to form study groups to work the problems before class. I recommend forming a small study group (2-4 students) and meeting before class to discuss the problems, and at the end of each week to review.

Problem 9.8

Problem 9.8 requires you to draft the document necessary to create a security interest in an object I will bring to class. The document should be one that, if you advanced \$1,000 to me as a loan and I signed the document, would create a valid, legally enforceable security interest in the object. You are to omit all provisions not necessary to achieve validity and legal (not practical) enforceability. Also, do not take a security interest in anything other than the object. You will find the readings for Assignments 8 and 9 very useful in preparing the document. This task is not as hard as it might sound and should be within the ability of a first-year associate.

You may use form documents or other documents consistent as what would be the practice in a law office. (Obviously, you may not copy someone else's work from the class.) You are responsible, however, for the document. For example, mistakes in the form or using the wrong form are your error. Also, any forms will need to be adapted to meet the facts of the problem. That is, except for my signature, do not submit an agreement with blanks that need to be completed.

The document is due before the beginning of our class on ____ (TBA). You are to submit an electronic copy of the document by e-mail to my faculty assistant, skennedy@law.usc.edu. In the subject

line use only these words: "3295 Security Interest." If you do not receive an acknowledgement of receipt, please contact Ms. Kennedy right away.

If the document creates a valid, legally enforceable security interest, it will receive a pass. If I have doubts about a particular document, I may e-mail you asking for argumentation and case law supporting the enforceability of your security interest. In real life, an agreement that almost but not quite creates a valid, legally enforceable security interest is a failing document, and that will be the case here.

Problem 18.7

Problem 18.7 requires you to draft a financing statement to perfect the security interest you created in Problem 9.8. (If your document from Problem 9.8 failed to create a valid security interest, we will pretend it did for purposes of Problem 18.7.) Standard search logic is in effect. Do not send filing fees or a cover letter. You should consider use of the Official Form in UCC § 9-521. You will find the readings for Assignments 16, 17, and 18 very useful in preparing this document. This task is not as hard as it might sound and should be within the ability of a first-year associate.

The document is due before the beginning of class on ____ (TBA). You are to submit an electronic copy of the document by e-mail to my faculty assistant, skennedy@law.usc.edu. In the subject line use only these words: " 3295 Perfection of Interest." If you do not receive an acknowledgement of receipt, please contact Ms. Kennedy right away.

If the document perfects the security interest, it will receive a pass.¹ If I have doubts, again I may e-mail you asking for argumentation and case law supporting the enforceability of your security interest. In real life, there is no such thing as a security interest that is "almost" perfected. Defective perfection is a failure, and that will be the case here.

Class Participation & Class Attendance

Class attendance, participation, and preparation are expected. I strongly recommend you attend class every day. I reserve the right to reward exceptional class participation or penalize exceptionally poor class participation in determining the final grade.

From time to time, I may offer students an opportunity to research legal or business questions that arise during the course of the semester. Participation will be open to any member of the class who is

¹ "Perfection" will be taken to mean that the security interest would beat the bankruptcy trustee if I (as the debtor) filed bankruptcy the day after you submit the document and ignoring preferential transfer issues. We will not have covered the interaction of bankruptcy with security interests at this point in the course. For purposes of Problem 18.7, there is only one thing you need to know: a financing statement that has been defectively perfected does not protect in bankruptcy the security interest it covers.

interested. I will share high quality answers with the rest of the class. Participation in such research assignments and quality of output will be considered for possible upward discretion.

During class, you may be connected to the Internet only for purposes related to class. This would include, for example, looking at a court opinion we are discussing or searching for information relevant to a point we are discussing. This does not include, for example, reading the news, e-mailing classmates, or sending instant messages. I very much encourage the use of computers in the classroom and encourage you to be active learners. Like any technology, however, computers can be misused. Please do not let your computer become a distraction to you or your classmates.

Office Hours:

I will stay after class to answer any questions. If you cannot meet at the end of class, please email me set up an appointment on Tuesday or Wednesday, or contact **skennedy@law.usc.edu**. If it is inconvenient to meet in person, we can also schedule remote office hours by phone or through video conferencing, using either Google voice or Skype.

We can also schedule group lunches or coffee on class days if students are interested (2 to 4 students per lunch/coffee).

Name Placards and Seating

Please bring your laminated name placard to class and place it in front of you. If you lose your name placard, you may obtain a free replacement from **skennedy@law.usc.edu**. Please keep the back row empty for guests and visitors.

Guest Lectures

There may be guest lectures from USC alumni or others working in industry. Students should attend these guest lectures, the same as any other class.

Syllabus Revisions

I may post revisions to the syllabus or announce changes in class. Please check the course website regularly!

Course Outline

The book is divided into forty (40) assignments. Each assignment is designed to be read as a whole before attempting any of the problems. I anticipate that we will cover roughly the first 20 to 30 assignments, perhaps concluding on assignment 26.

I will announce and/or post weekly assignments on blackboard and try to adjust as we go along. Because of the textbook's design, I may sometimes have to ask you to read ahead. We will likely complete approximately one problem set per hour and a half of class (so approximately two per week), perhaps a bit slower toward the beginning and faster toward the end.

At the end of each assignment is a problem set. It is vitally important that you attempt to answer the problems in the problem set before coming to class. A list of problems to skip is provided below. Because the problem method might be a new experience for your legal education, I will say a few words about it. Be aware that the problems are the primary way you will learn the material. Note the word "attempt." If you have the right answer, that is fine, but the point of the problems is to learn the material. I do not consider class discussion to be a quiz show where the point is to reward the person with the right answer. The whole point of the problems is that they are hard and often won't have an obvious answer.

Sometimes the answer will come to you, and sometimes, it will not. When it does not, we'll work through any difficulties in class, but class discussion is unlikely to be helpful if you're paging through the statute for the first time during class. You will see that the casebook directs you to the relevant statutory sections to answer the problem. If you do not try to work through the problems and read the statute before coming to class, you probably will have difficulty understanding the material.

Here is a general outline of our course coverage.

- I. Creditors & Debtors
 - a. Creditor's Remedies Under State Law
 - b. Creditor's Remedies in Bankruptcy
 - c. Creation of a Security Interest
 - d. Default

- II. Creditors & Third Parties
 - a. Perfection
 - b. Maintaining Perfection
 - c. Priority
 - d. Competing Rights in Collateral

Problems to skip:

2.8

4.6

5.5, 5.6, 5.8

8.5

9.7

10.7

11.5

Problem set 12

Problem set 14

15.5.a (but be sure to do 15.5.b., c., and d)

17.7

Problems 18.3 to 18.6 (but complete the drafting exercise, 18.7).

Problems 19.5 to 19.7

Problem sets 20, 21

Problems 22.3 to 22.9 (but complete 22.1 and 22.2).

Problems 23.5 and 23.6 (focus on 23.1 and 23.2)

Problem 24.3 to 24.6 (only do 24.1 and 24.2)

Problem set 25

26.5 to 26.7 (do only problems 26.1 to 26.4)

Problem Set 27

I look forward to a great semester!

Class recordings

Class recordings will be available during the semester to students who miss class because of illness, death of a family member or other serious family emergencies, or a job interview that could not be scheduled to avoid missing class. If one of these situations arises, to request the recording please email me, Shirly Kennedy, and IT with the name of the class, the room number, day and times, and the reason for the absence. Class recordings will be made available to all students during the last week of class to be used for exam review purposes.

USC Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.
<https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student
EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/> Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students