Hello all!

Today only a quick update. Lots of you have been watching and commenting on the video lectures that you fellow students have created. This makes me happy! There will be more coming along, once I have time to post them, so stay tuned.

I’ve also completed my own series of lectures about explanations for why the Supreme Court grants cert in some cases but not others. They’re on Canvas, so take a look and please leave questions or comments. I’ll respond!

For the rest of the week, we will participate in a debate about a current case. The story is this: The former mayor of Allentown, PA, has been convicted for corruption and is serving a 15-year sentence. An appeal is still pending. He has gone to court and asked to be released from prison because he fears that he will be exposed to the Corona virus. The US Court of Appeals denied his request. I do not know if he plans to take his case to the Supreme Court, but if he did, the question is, should the Supreme Court grant cert? This is what we’ll debate. The different teams have pro and con roles assigned and there are different roles that individual group members can take on. Let’s do this until Friday. It’ll help you explore the reasons for and against cert; in particular, it’ll lead us to think about what makes a case important.

More information on Canvas.

The bigger background is that prisons are closed environments in which individual prisoners cannot be easily isolated. They are breeding grounds for the virus, and there are broader political debates around the question whether some prisoners should be released to protect them from illness.

The essay prompts for the second exam, which now is an all-essay exam, have been posted. You can write two essays or just one, your choice. If you write two, I’ll provide feedback on both essays but will count only the one with the better grade. The essays or essay are due on Monday. Let me know if you have any questions or concerns!

Also, there is an Ask Me Anything on the Supreme Court process. Once you’ve left your comments in the videos and participated in the debate discussion board, think about what further questions you have and post them on the AMA.

I look forward to our debate and conversations on Canvas! Be well and stay in touch!