

At the Intersection of Judicial Decision-Making, Political Economy, and Access to Justice



This panel presents and discusses the results of four (4) years of continuing education programming focused at the intersection of political economy and judicial decision-making through the Political Economy and Access to Justice Judicial Education Seminar (PEAJJES). Sponsored by The Murphy Institute, PEAJJES provides retired and sitting federal, state, and municipal court judges frameworks for collaborative exploration of the various, complex ways that policy intersects with questions of economy, politics, and access to justice. These dynamics are examined in relation to broad, intersecting issues that affect persons appearing in court, including transportation, housing, job, and food (in)security, technological innovation and advancement, advocacy, literacy, mental health, and English as a second language. These dynamics are also considered in relation to concepts that directly impact the judiciary, including ethics, professionalism, and judicial economy.

By the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

- Describe the relationship between the theory of judicial independence and the praxis of judicial decision-making
- Contextualize the work of PEAJJES in relation to political economy theory
- See efficacy in judicial education that builds transparency around the impact of judicial decision-making on the lived experiences of parties and people

Speakers:



Gary Hoover, PhD

Gary Hoover is the Executive Director of the Murphy Institute at Tulane University. He is also a professor of economics and is an affiliate professor of law.

From 2015 until 2020 he was a President's Associates Presidential Professor and the Chair of the Economics Department at the University of Oklahoma.

Dr. Hoover received his PhD in Economics from Washington University in St. Louis in 1998. Since then, he has published numerous scholarly research papers, book chapters, books on topics concerning income redistribution/poverty, political economy, and ethics in the economics profession. He is the

author of the book *Ladder or Lottery: Economic Promises and the Reality of Who Gets Ahead*. Dr. Hoover was the co-chair of the American Economic Association Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession from 2011 to 2024. From 2022 to 2023 he was the president of the Southern Economic Association. He is on the advisory board of the Opportunity and Inclusive Growth Institute at the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank. In addition, since 2023 he has been on the board of the National Tax Association.

Dr. Hoover is the founding and current editor of the *Journal of Economics, Race, and Policy*. He has been a visiting scholar at the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin. Dr. Hoover is a network member at the Center for Economic Studies & ifo Institute in Munich, Germany. He has also been a guest professor at the Universities of Hannover and Konstanz in Germany, the University of Vienna in Austria and X'ian University in China.



Hon. Nghana Lewis, PhD, JD, LLM

Nghana Lewis is a professor of English and Africana Studies; a faculty affiliate of the School of Law; and an adjunct professor with the Department of Psychology. She also serves as District Judge with Louisiana's 40th Judicial District Court. Dr. Lewis's cross-sectional research and teaching interests include black literary & cultural studies, black women's health, and juvenile justice. She is the author of *Entitled to the Pedestal: Place, Race, and Progress in White Southern Women's Writing, 1920-*

1945 (2009) and *Black Women's Health in the Age of Hip Hop & HIV/AIDS: A Narrative Remix* (2025); and she is a founder and co-organizer of the Black Women's Health Conference Task Force at Tulane University, which biennially convenes the [Black Women's Health Conference](#). In 2021, Dr. Lewis launched [The Literacy Clinic](#), a court-based prevention-intervention program that supports literacy education for adults and youth involved in Louisiana's criminal and juvenile legal systems, and families with children enrolled in Louisiana's resource-challenged elementary public schools. With funding from [The Murphy Institute](#), she established the Political Economy and Access to Justice Judicial Education Seminar ([PEAJJES](#)) in 2022 to provide judges an academic framework for examining and formulating best practices for strengthening America's justice system, as informed by law, theory, and lived experiences.