
Course Outline

Course: LAWS 1000P **Introduction to Legal Studies**

Term: Fall/Winter 2007-2008

Class Time: Thursday 2:35-4:35pm

Room: 624 Southam Hall

Instructor: Steve Tasson

Contact: **Office:** C476 LA **Office Hours:** Thurs 11am-12pm or by appt.

Phone: x. 3693 **Email:** stasson@sympatico.ca

Teaching Asst: _____

Contact Info: _____

Overview of the course

In contemporary societies the law is not only the primary mechanism used to resolve disputes, but, as importantly, it also defines a significant part of our collective and individual identities. It is therefore also a means through which groups define themselves and the roles and responsibilities they expect from individual members. For example, law plays a fundamental role in defining what it means to be a citizen and the rights and responsibilities that are associated with citizenship.

While this can **empower** individuals and provide a strong sense of security and belonging, the processes and consequences of law are not always so benevolent or positive. For example, we might ask how the legal system is implicated in the historical and present-day experience of Canada's Aboriginal peoples, or what role law and legal actors play in maintaining – rather than alleviating – existing **social inequalities** based on class, race, gender, religion, sexuality, etc.

More big questions we discuss...

- What exactly is law?
- Does law need to be moral?
- What does it mean to be a citizen?
- Is the law accessible to everyone?
- What are the sources of Canadian law?
- How has globalization affected our laws, our rights and our courts?
- What are rights and who has them?
- Who should ultimately make decisions about our rights and their limits?
- Are there better alternatives to the current court system?
- Why does law regulate some things and not others?
- Can law promote social change or does it merely legitimize inequalities and maintain the status quo?

These are critical questions. They are fundamentally questions about what law's role can and should be in society. To begin to answer these questions we must first understand

the origins of our law and also the processes through which legal decision-making takes place. How are such vital decisions made, who ultimately makes them and on what authority? What role do everyday citizens play in the system of legal decision-making and what does this say about the accessibility and accountability of Canada's legal system? How has this changed since the introduction of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

Course Objectives (What I want you to get out of the course)

1. Explore the implications of competing "perspectives of law" and law's role in society.
2. Develop an understanding of the sources of Canadian law and the historical links to, and treatment of, other systems of law.
3. Explore the relationship between Charter rights, human rights, and the principle of Parliamentary supremacy.
4. Improve your ability to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of competing arguments.
5. Investigate the basics of criminal, public and private law in Canada
6. Identify and critically evaluate some of law's key players, their motivations, and how they affect the legal system.
7. Explore the relationship between law and morality and be capable of applying these debates to existing social issues such as obscenity and the limits of freedom of expression.
8. Examine the relationship between law and contemporary theories of citizenship and inclusion.
9. Improve your ability to communicate ideas both orally and in writing.
10. Critically assess the potential of employing law in contemporary social struggles and movements.

Course Objectives (What you want to get out of the course)

1.
2.
3.

Required Texts

Vago, Steven and Adie Nelson. (2008). *Law and Society* (2nd Canadian ed.). Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Carleton Department of Law Casebook Group. (2003). *Introduction to Legal Studies* (3rd ed.). North York: Captus Press.

In addition to these two main texts there will be a few other readings for which you will be responsible. These will be available on WebCT.

Note: These texts are available from *Octopus Books, 116 Third Ave., Ottawa* (located in “the Glebe”- a 20 minute walk from campus or a short ride on the #7).

These books are **NOT** available for this course at the Carleton Bookstore. **Be sure to purchase the correct edition.**

****The schedule for weekly required readings is available on WebCT****

Course Evaluation

Fall Term

Fall Commentary	10%	(due mid October)
Fall Term Paper	15%	(due Friday November 16)
Mid-year Exam	15%	

Winter Term

Winter Commentary	10%	(due before reading week)
Winter Term Paper	20%	(due March 13, 2007)
Final Exam	20%	

Participation	10%	
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Course Components

****You must complete ALL components of the course to receive a passing grade****

Participation

Despite the fact that this is a survey lecture course, individual participation is still an important component of the course and part of your mark. Your main opportunity to

participate is in the weekly tutorial sessions. **You are expected to contribute to your tutorial discussions and come prepared to discuss assigned readings.** Your participation mark is based on:

- 1) actual attendance to each tutorial;
- 2) your participation in the tutorial and any planned exercises or exercises;
- 3) your participation in on-line discussions on the course **WebCT** discussion page. This is an important forum to ask questions and express your ideas. It offers a number of advantages: first, it grants you the time to thoughtfully ask questions or raise concerns. Second, it enables you to contribute to the class even if you do not feel comfortable talking in the tutorial. Lastly, it allows you to communicate and discuss ideas with the class that we might not be able to address fully in the lectures or in the tutorials.

How do I get full participation marks?

1. Ask your tutorial leader questions.
2. Show up and be on time.
3. Keep up with the assigned readings and **come to tutorial prepared** to talk about them.
4. Post messages on WebCT.
5. Participate in tutorial discussions and activities.

Commentaries

A commentary is shorter, less formal, and more summary-oriented than a term paper. The commentaries in this course are designed to give you a chance to both submit a piece of writing for feedback prior to your term papers and also to explore and discuss a single article from the course in more detail. Each commentary will be **approximately 4 pages** in length and will be evaluated slightly differently than your term papers. As with all course requirements more specifics will be discussed in the lecture and tutorials.

Term Papers

There are two term papers that ask you to summarize, synthesize and critique (take a position on) some of the material we investigate in the course. These term papers provide you an opportunity to discuss a selection of the readings that we investigate in the course and draw connections to some of the broader questions and themes highlighted in the lectures. Each paper will be a **minimum of 6 pages** in length and specific questions, due dates and rubrics for evaluation will be discussed in more detail in lecture and in the tutorials.

Mid-year & Final Exam

Likewise there are two exams in the course. Both will be sat during the formally scheduled exam periods in December and April. The dates, times and locations are scheduled by the university. The exams will likely consist of 80-100 multiple-choice questions each. For the most part multiple-choice exams aim to test the **breadth** of knowledge you have gained in the course rather than the **depth** (this is what your term-papers and commentaries are for). More specifics and tips for studying will be discussed closer to the end of term.

Some General Guidelines on Assignments for This Course

(We will be discussing these requirements in more detail in class or the tutorial)

ASSIGNMENT FORMAT

Any written work submitted in this course **must** be typewritten, double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font with standard 1" margins. All assignments **must** include a title page that has, at minimum, your name and student number, the course code and your tutorial leader's name on it. Assignments are to be stapled in the top left corner and **not put in plastic covers or other bindings**. Title pages, bibliographies and extensive footnotes are not counted in determining an assignment's page length.

Assignment Format	
Typewritten	<input type="checkbox"/>
12pts Times New Roman	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bibliography	<input type="checkbox"/>
Title page	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pages Numbered	<input type="checkbox"/>

LATE POLICY

Late assignments will be penalized **one full letter grade per day** that they are late (i.e. A- to B-, B- to C-, etc.). Late assignments are to be submitted to the **Law Department's drop box** (Loeb C473) unless otherwise noted. **Do not** put them under my door or your tutorial leader's door. Note as well that **email is not** considered an acceptable means of assignment submission.

BACKUP COPIES

Student must retain a **hard copy** of anything submitted for a grade in the class. This hard copy should be maintained for at least 3 months following the end of the class in case there is any discrepancy in final grades. In the very unlikely event that a submitted assignment is misplaced, you must be able to produce another copy upon request.

REFERENCING & PLAGARISM

The assignments in the course must be properly referenced and include a bibliography of all sources used in the preparation of the assignment. You will discuss the citation style in some detail in your tutorial group. **Failure to reference properly or attempting to pass someone else's ideas or work off as your own is considered plagiarism.** I take it very seriously and so should you. Plagiarism can lead to penalties that range from failure of the course to expulsion from the university. Don't be dumb.

Requests for Academic Accommodations

Below is the university official policy regarding students requiring accommodation. **Note the deadlines.** In addition to discussing any concerns with the PMC or the Equity Office, please feel free to talk to me about any concerns you may have.

For Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations are required to contact a co-ordinator at the Paul Menton Centre to complete the necessary *letters of accommodation*. The student must then make an appointment to discuss their needs with the instructor **at least two weeks prior** to the first class test. This is to ensure sufficient time is available to make the necessary accommodation arrangements.

For Religious Observance:

Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious observance should make a formal, written request to their instructors for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during **the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible** after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event.

Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student.

Students or instructors who have questions or want to confirm accommodation eligibility of a religious event or practice may refer to the Equity Services website for a list of holy days and Carleton's Academic Accommodation policies, or may contact an Equity Services Advisor in the Equity Services Department for assistance.

For Pregnancy:

Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. The student must then make an appointment to discuss her needs with the instructor **at least two weeks prior** to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

What if I require accommodation?

For Student with Disabilities

Contact Paul Menton Centre (6608) to obtain *letters of accommodations*

For Religious Observance

To be worked out on individual basis with instructor. Consult Equity Services Website or an Equity Advisor (ext. 5622) for Policy and list of Holy Days (www.carleton.ca/equity)

For Pregnancy

Contact Equity Services (ext. 5622) to obtain *letters of accommodation*.