
COURSE:	FYSM 1502 – Selected Topics in Legal Studies: Exploring the Sociolegal Imagination and Cultural Approaches to Law
TERM:	FALL/WINTER 2020-2021
PREREQUISITES:	None
CLASS:	Day & Time: Please check Carleton Central for current Class Schedule. Room: All Courses in the Fall 2020 term are offered online. At least for the Fall Term classes in this course will be delivered through a mix of <i>pre-recorded videos</i> posted to CULearn and "live", online class and group discussion sessions conducted using the Big Blue Button conferencing platform (through CULearn). These will occur during our regularly scheduled class times.
INSTRUCTOR:	Stephen J. Tasson
CONTACT:	Office: Room D488 Loeb Building Office Hrs: Tuesday 1:00 – 2:00pm or by appointment (online through Big Blue Button (CULearn link)) Telephone: None Email: steve.tasson@carleton.ca

CALENDAR COURSE DESCRIPTION

Selected topics in legal studies.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The aim of the course is to introduce and explore some classic and contemporary approaches to understanding the complex relationship between “law” and “society”. What do we mean when we refer to these “things” and how do we understand and constitute them? Early in the year we examine some classical debates about how best to conceptualize “law” and its social role. We explore and unpack some of the core assumptions regarding the necessity of a “legal order” for “social order” and the virtues (and limits) of legal problem solving. Can ask question like: Is violence an intrinsic part of law? What do we mean when we talk about the “rule of law”? What assumptions must legal actors and legal processes make about us – our capacities, our relationships, our desires – to render us *regulatable* by law?

These are thorny questions! However, throughout the course we will discuss why such foundational questions help to understand what law really *does* in our society today, and, as

importantly, what role legal actors and institutions *might* be able to play in projects of social reform and social order.

Particularly in the second half of the course we devote considerable time to thinking specifically about how most people today understand and “experience” law. We explore the merits (or otherwise) of more recent “cultural approaches” to studying law in society. What is our daily “experience” of the law? How do depictions of law in cultural forms and artifacts (movies, TV, novels, short stories etc.) impact the ways many people in our society understand the operation and legitimacy of legal actors and institutions?

Centrally, as part of this work, we explore a number of more “popular” representations of the role of “the law” and “justice” – that arguably provide useful insights into the constitution, values and even absurdities of “the law” (or, at the very least, show us how some influential authors imagined the functions and dysfunction of legal processes, actors and institutions seeking “social order”).

One of the key benefits of the FYSM format is the ability **to investigate these questions through an interdisciplinary approach**. This means drawing from the research and conceptual resources of multiple academic disciplines. A central aspect of the first part of the course will be to discuss some of the debates, again, about the value and pitfalls of this type of “open” approach to the study of law.

While this course is offered through the department of **Law and Legal Studies**, students should expect to discuss questions and explore content and approaches coming through and intersecting with other disciplinary traditions. As will become evident early on, what constitutes a strictly “legal studies question” and how we go about answering it is far from settled.

COURSE GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1. Develop a degree of comfort understanding and discussing conceptual constructions of law, justice and legality.
2. Recognize the value of theoretical or conceptual approaches to select academic debates and the wide-reaching practical consequences that arise from the outcomes of these debates (i.e. the ideological power of certain “ways of knowing”).
3. Read some key texts in the fields of “law and literature” and “legal cultural studies”. Be capable of reading and connecting current social issues through these approaches.
4. Develop and hone your ability to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of written arguments. Use these skills to reflect and improve your own writing.
5. Learn how to read, analyze, and employ popular fiction “texts” in academic arguments.
6. Evaluate the potential of employing cultural forms to challenge contemporary understandings about the role and potential of law in social and political struggles.
7. Explore and evaluate a selection of classical texts in jurisprudence and socio-legal studies. Connect these to current social and political reform movements.
8. Improve your ability to structure and communicate your own ideas and arguments both orally and in writing.

REQUIRED TEXTS

There is no “textbook” for this course. Required texts/readings for the **Fall Term** are made available through CULearn. Students may be required to purchase 1-2 short texts in the **Winter Term** but this will be confirmed before the end of the Fall term. Further details about accessing the course readings will be discussed in the first class.

EVALUATION

(All components must be completed in order to receive a passing grade)

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Department and of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Department Chair and the Dean.

Fall Term

Fall Portfolio/Notebook (5)	15%	(Continuous)
Position Paper #1	10%	(due 11pm October 20 th)
Position Paper #2	10%	(due 11pm December 6 th)
Class Engagement/Participation	10%	(Continuous)
Presentation/Discussant	2.5%	(Individually Scheduled)
CSAS Workshops (Fall only)	Max. 5% Bonus	(See below for details)

Winter Term

Winter Portfolio/Notebook (5)	15%	(Continuous)
Position Paper #3	10%	(due 11pm February 12 th)
Research Paper	10%	(due 11pm April 17 th)
Proposal/Library Workshop	5%	(due 11pm March 12 th)
Class Engagement/Participation	10%	(Continuous)
Presentation/Discussant	2.5%	(Individually Scheduled)

COURSE COMPONENTS**Fall and Winter Portfolios/Notebooks (15+15%)**

Most weeks on CULearn there is a question or short set of questions that asks you to reflect on the course materials for that week. The aim of this course component is that you complete a short reflective piece of writing engaging/answering this to reflect on the material for the week. In some weeks, this will be comprised primarily of summarizing work but most weeks you will be asked to engage/reflect on the texts more creatively, to draw connections to current events, or even connect the sources (or issues) to your own experience.

The aim of these short entries/reflections is to encourage you to develop the habit of taking “good notes” when you read. There are several notetaking methods that we will discuss in the first few weeks of class. This course component also measures your overall engagement with the course. The entries are less about providing perfect summaries or simply about getting the “right” answer to the question(s) posed. Rather, the main aim is to demonstrate to me your “engagement” with the sources and, if possible, to connect the week’s material to other themes or issues you see developing in the course.

Some of the readings or questions may be challenging and so your reflection can take note of this. You are free to talk about aspects that seem unclear and confusing to you as well. Again, the aim is to show you **are working through the material in a thoughtful and engaged way**.

Note that the mark for this component takes the **top 5** of these entries/ submissions (each term). You are therefore only required to complete 5 entries to fulfill this component, but you should complete as many as you can.

More formatting and rubric details appear on CULearn. Unless otherwise specified these submissions should be **approx. 300 words and be double-spaced (roughly just over a page)**. Like other written components of the course, these entries are submitted via CULearn and must be submitted before the deadlines indicated there.

NOTE: There are **NO LATE penalties for these “reflections”**. If they are not submitted on time they **WILL NOT be accepted** for grading (there are no “extensions” available).

The deadlines are *purposefully very flexible* to allow you to complete them when it works best throughout the term. If you “miss” completing a week – for whatever reason – you can just try on another week as **only five per term are “required”**.

Position Papers (10+10+10%)

The course is designed to be very “writing focused”. There are three short papers due throughout the course. These papers ask you to summarize, synthesize and critique (i.e. offer a position on) some questions arising from the material we investigate in the course. It provides you an opportunity to discuss the course materials that we investigate and draw connections to some of the broader questions and themes highlighted in the lectures. The early papers are weighted more toward summative elements (demonstrating understanding). In the second term the paper weighting shifts slightly toward analysis. Each paper’s length is **approx. 1200 words (roughly 5 double-spaced pages)**. The specific requirements, questions, format and rubrics for evaluation will be outlined in the assignment sheets (available well in advance of the deadlines on CULearn). There will be opportunities to discuss paper expectations, citation concerns, and other general tips to assure your best grades on this component.

Research Paper (and Proposal) (10% + 5%)

The final paper of the Winter Term is specifically designated as a research paper. This paper grants you a little more freedom/choice in terms of exploring a topic of interest relevant to the course themes.

The Research Paper will be made up of defined components which will require that you submit some parts of your work for feedback prior to the final deadline (specifically a **short proposal/ annotated bibliography**). Depending on a number of factors some aspects of group work may be incorporated into this final paper, however, marks are awarded individually. As with all components, the details will be clearly explained on a separate assignment sheet and discussed well in advance of the deadline.

Currently the **proposal** position of the Research Paper is a separate grade (5%). Depending on our access to the library in the Winter Term, some or all of this grade may be shifted to a **Library Workshop**. I will clarify this component at the end of the Fall term.

Class Engagement (12.5% + 12.5%)

As you can see “Class Engagement” makes up a significant portion of your course grade. This is a “seminar” course which is normally very different from a lecture course. Seminars succeed or fail largely on the active preparation and contributions of their members. When you decide to take this course, you commit to participating in the class!

You are expected attend “live” sessions and be prepared to participate in discussions and any assigned activities within the session.

Your “Class Engagement” grade is based on these criteria (a guiding rubric for “participation” is available on CULearn):

A) Basic attendance

While we are not able to meet “in person” (at least in the Fall), you are still expected to attend scheduled “live” sessions (the schedule is on CULearn). This sets the baseline for your grade. If you miss 20% of the scheduled “live sessions” then your possible component grade cannot exceed 80% for this component. If you expect to be absent for justified reasons you should discussion with me asap.

B) The quality of your contribution to weekly “live” or online discussions (i.e. Forum) and exercises

Informed discussion is the backbone of a seminar course. We discuss the course material both in small groups as well as with the entire class and you must be prepared to do this (e.g. come prepared with questions, comments and concerns about the required materials). Quality participation is not just about “talking” or making comments. It also depends on **active and engaged listening** (not just to me, but to your peers) and your ability to encourage and “open” discussion rather than close it down. As noted, participation also may include “planned exercises” such as in-session writing.

C) Conferencing

At least once per term I will be holding student conferences to discuss your specific progress in the course (and first-year generally). You are, of course, welcome to talk to me outside these times as well (e.g. in office hours) but attendance to an online scheduled conference is required and counted toward your “Class Engagement” mark in both terms.

D) Presentation/Discussant

A separate portion of your “Class Engagement” grade is set aside for a “presentation/discussant” mark (2.5% per term). At least once per term (after selecting a week) you will prepare a short summary presentation of a select course reading (approx. 5 mins) and a set of discussion questions (2 or 3) in advance of a live discussion. Your role will be to prompt discussion at the start of the class discussion through your prepared questions (which you will submit to me). More than one person will serve as a “discussant” each week so you will not be alone and **may wish to work with the other discussants for the same week as a group**. As always further details will be discussed on an assignment sheet on CULearn and I will also clarify some limitations on the groups in class.

***BONUS MARKS* (up to 5% to your final grade)**

Carleton’s Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS) offers an [“Incentive Program”](#). CSAS Learning Support Workshops (exclusively **online** this year) are designed to help students cultivate and refine their academic skills for a university environment. Learning Support Workshops for Fall 2020 term are available starting at the beginning of the Fall term and must be completed by the end of term (December 11, 2020), to receive credit for the Incentive Program.

To earn your bonus mark(s) you must:

- i. Complete a fall term workshop (online) from the approved workshops for this course, and
- ii. write a very brief reflection on it (see the guidelines on CULearn—the reflection is due 2 weeks after the workshop).

You will earn 1% for each completed workshop (and reflection) to a maximum of a 5% BONUS to your final grade for the year.

Workshops include: Note-Taking, Academic Reading, Time Management, Writing for Academic Purposes, Critical Thinking, Strategies for Proofreading, and Test and Exam Preparation.

CSAS staff members administer these workshops and record attendance. To have your attendance recognized you must pass a quiz at the end of the lesson. At the end of the fall term, CSAS sends me attendance information. Bonus marks will be added to your final grade in April.

Find the complete schedule of Learning Support Workshops by visiting mySuccess via Carleton Central. You can also view your CSAS Skills Development Workshop attendance history at any time by logging into mySuccess on [the CSAS site](#).

SCHEDULE (FALL & WINTER)

The complete **Required Reading and Lecture topics schedule is available on CULearn**. If you have any questions or concerns about these topics or readings, please let me know via email. Please also note these other important FALL and WINTER term dates:

September 9 – Fall term begins

October 12 – Statutory holiday (Thanksgiving)

October 26 – 30 - Fall Term Break

December 11 – Last Day of Fall Term Classes & Last Day to hand in Fall Term work.

December 12 – 23 – Formally Scheduled exams take place

January 6 – Winter term begins

February 15 – Statutory holiday (Family Day)

February 15 – 19 - Winter Term Break

April 2 – Statutory holiday (Good Friday)

April 9 – Last Day of Winter Term Classes & Last Day to hand in Fall Term work.

April 11 – 23 – Formally Scheduled exams take place

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES

The format and delivery of this course has been altered significantly to reflect the disruptions caused by the global pandemic. The most crucial changes are that **some course materials will be delivered asynchronously (i.e. pre-recorded and made available on CULearn)**. There will still be **synchronous** elements (class discussions) and these will be facilitated using **Big Blue Button** conferencing software on CULearn). These will take place in the regularly scheduled class times.

My overall goal in structuring this course is to provide you, as students, with as much flexibility as possible whilst still providing a stable structure in which we can get through the course materials and meet the key learning outcomes for the course.

Here are a few interconnected concrete steps can you take to succeed in this course:

1. Make a personal schedule and stick to it.

The class structure very purposefully forces you to “stay on top of” the weekly work. I know that a steady drip of smaller assignments can be annoying, but the aim is to keep you engaged (which will improve your mark) while still allowing some flexibility in when you complete the work. **This course relies heavily on CULearn this year**. Be sure to check out the CULearn page and visit it often throughout the term (this should be part of your schedule/plan).

2. Get it in!

The grade weighting/ “stakes” on any individual component are purposefully kept low. Having smaller “low stakes” assignments is designed to encourage you to get things in and to not be too worried about any individual component. The luxury of a full year course is that it allows you to receive feedback over a longer timeframe and incorporate this feedback to develop your skills. Get work in and get feedback on how to improve.

3. Ask for help if you need help or any course requirements are unclear (YOU ARE NOT ALONE).

First year university can already be a challenge with finding your place and acclimatizing to a very different social and learning environment. This year is going to be more challenging than most. I fear that it will be easier than ever for you to feel confused or isolated because of the disparate delivery of courses and because you are not “in” classes every week. I do want to stress that **you are not alone!**

I want you to succeed, not only in this class, but in your first-year more generally. You should not hesitate to contact me if you are confused or worried. You are also part of a “class” and you should not underestimate the value of peer support and an academic community. With some luck, we will all get to know one another in the seminar and you should not be afraid to talk to your peers and ask (and answer their) questions. This may be intimidating at first, but part of the university experience is recognizing **you are now part of a community of learning** in which we all have a shared interest in fostering understanding, disseminating knowledge and forwarding new ideas.

4. Be open to new ideas and new ways of thinking (and communicating).

Good courses ought to challenge us to think differently about what we think we already know and/or force us to find new ways to articulate our positions or experience. Consequently, they may prompt us to reflect on ourselves, our relationships with others, and the structures of the world around us. This can sometimes be an **unsettling and uncomfortable process** and different people react to these challenges very differently. In this class the source of these challenges may be the course materials (or me) but they may also come through interactions with your peers. The fact that our course takes place exclusively “online” means that our intentions and nuisance in our communication may be harder to measure. Be attentive to this fact and **be “generous” in your communication** with others in the class. Personal attacks in any part of the course **will not be tolerated**. We will talk about some class “ground rules” in the first couple of classes.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows: <https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf>

Pregnancy Obligation

Please contact me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Department of Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC): <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Religious Obligation

Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Department of Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC): <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact The Paul Menton Centre (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC Website for their deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable) <https://carleton.ca/pmc>

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/studentssupport/svpolicy/>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: <https://students.carleton.ca/services/accommodation/>

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own. Plagiarism includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, and material on the Internet. Plagiarism is a serious offence.

More information on the University's Academic Integrity Policy can be found at:

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Department Policy

The Department of Law and Legal Studies operates in association with certain policies and procedures. Please review these documents to ensure that your practices meet our Department's expectations: <https://carleton.ca/law/current-students/>

OTHER COURSE SPECIFIC POLICIES

(Please ask if there is any confusion or concern with any course-related policies!)

ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING and SUBMISSION

Unless otherwise specified, any written work submitted in this course must be double-spaced, formatted to 12pt Times New Roman or Arial font with standard margins. Assignments normally must include your name and student number and the course code in the document's header (or on a title page). Title pages, bibliographies and extensive footnotes are not usually counted in determining an assignment's word count or page length.

Assignments are normally submitted **using the links provided for this specific purpose on the CULearn page for this course**. It is your responsibility to ensure that assignments are submitted in a **readable file format** (usually .doc or .pdf formats) **before the deadline**. If the assignment is unreadable it will not be considered submitted. If you anticipate any issues (technological or otherwise) you should discuss this with your TA or with me ASAP in **advance of the deadline**.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS & EXTENSIONS POLICY***Why are deadlines so important?***

As already noted, I try and build in a certain degree of flexibility for when the majority of class assignments in this course are submitted/completed. Deadlines are important (for you) because they force you to submit your best effort with the time given and allow you to receive feedback at the same time as the majority of the class. This keeps everyone on the same page and working through the same material at the same time. Deadlines are also important (for me) because I plan my time around when assignments come due and when I have time to mark and provide feedback on them. Because the assignments come fairly frequently, if you get behind on them, then they can begin to "run into" each other and this can become very overwhelming very fast. Time management skills are something that you really need to develop for your long-term success. If you are struggling with this, then please let me know EARLY and we can come up with some strategies!

In practice, I fully understand you have competing commitments, responsibilities, and priorities. Some of these priorities may supersede this course and necessitate that some assignments be submitted late. While this is not ideal, it is why there is flexibility built into some submissions and why there is a policy for late submissions for major components (mainly the papers).

NOTE: A late paper/assignment will normally be penalized 5% per day (e.g. a paper marked as a 70% that was 1 day late would receive a grade 65%) (unless otherwise specified on the assignment instructions). Late assignments must be submitted normally through CULearn unless you are otherwise directed.

Email is NOT considered an acceptable means of submission for any assignment

Late assignment may not be graded and "returned" along normal timelines and the quantity of feedback you receive may be affected.

Extension requests

If you know in advance you will be unable to complete an assignment on time and you have a valid reason you may request a deadline extension. In these cases, you **must normally contact me in advance to speak to me about this** (during office hours is best).

If relevant, you can also request extensions lasting **less than 7 days**, by completing the form at the following link and submit it to me via email **prior to the assignment due date**.

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/wp-content/uploads/self-declaration.pdf> (be sure to read this form carefully and check the relevant boxes).

BACKUP COPIES

Student must retain a “backup” copy of anything submitted for a grade in the class. This copy should be kept for at least 3 months following the end of the course in case there is an academic integrity concern, a discrepancy in final grades or an issue with the files submitted to CULearn. Students must be able to produce a copy of assignments within 24hrs upon request.

REFERENCING & PLAGIARISM (Part II)

Assignments in the course must be properly referenced and include a bibliography of all sources used in the preparation of the assignment (unless directed otherwise). We will discuss citation styles in some detail in class. I understand that, to this point, students have had varying degrees of experience with citation and referencing in their academic work. Regardless, the expectation is that you have a basic ability to reference and cite other’s work used in preparing your own assignments. As highlighted above, failure to reference properly or attempting to pass someone else’s ideas or work off as your own constitutes plagiarism. Both the university and I take it very seriously and so should you. Plagiarism can lead to penalties that are very serious. Recklessly or purposefully engaging in it is incredibly misguided. If you are struggling or unsure about how best to use sources in preparing your work in the course, it is far better to contact me and talk to me about resources to help and about other assignment expectations!