

LAWS 3501 A - Law in the Information Society

Winter Term 2025
Department of Law and Legal Studies
Carleton University

Meg D. Lonergan meg.lonergan@carleton.ca

Office hours: please email for an appointment

T.A.: Please see Brightspace for T.A. contact information

Brightspace course page link: <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/285173>

Please note that this is an online asynchronous course.

While it is scheduled online for Wednesdays 8:35am to 11:25am EST, students are required to ensure that they are keeping up with posted lecture materials, readings, assignments, and other course components.

Course Description

Legal responses to challenges of the information society. Topics may include privacy, surveillance and monitoring, access to information, freedom of expression, control of objectionable content, Charter and human rights issues, and security.

Prerequisites

1.0 credit in LAWS at the 2000 level.

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of LAWS 3501A Law in the Information Society students will be well-versed in major topics related to law and its intersections with mass communication, the internet, emerging technologies, and their governance.

Course Materials and Texts

All required course materials will be hyperlinked or posted to the course Brightspace page. Students will require access to a computer and internet access.

There are no additional costs associated with this course. There are no additional costs associated with this course.

Content Warning

This course has materials and topics related to criminal offences and violence that some people may find uncomfortable, including non-consensual image sharing (revenge porn), child pornography, obscenity, hate speech, colonialism, racism, terrorism, free expression and censorship. Students are expected to engage with all topics with professionalism and from a research-based approach. Students are encouraged to practice self-care in all courses involving difficult subject matter. A list of on and off campus resources can be found towards the end of this course outline.

Policies

Emails: I endeavour to answer emails within 72 hours (not including weekends or holidays). Please do follow up if a response is not received after four business days. Only emails sent from Carleton student accounts may receive a reply. Please ensure all communications with either the T.A. or instructor are professional and respectful in tone.

Accommodations and Extensions: Please request extensions as far in advance as possible.

Late policy: There is a 5% per day late penalty; assignments more than 7 days late may not be accepted.

Evaluation

- I. **Weekly: *What does this article meme?* (10x4%=40%)**
 - **Due: Friday by noon each week via Brightspace (no late submissions accepted)**
- II. **Midterm: Online Harms report (25%)**
 - **Due: Monday, February 24th by noon via Brightspace**
- III. **Take home final exam: podcast/vlog assignment (35%)**
 - **Due Saturday: April 26th by noon via Brightspace (extensions may only be granted in exceptional circumstances in accordance with exam policies)**

Assignments emailed to the instructor or T.A. will not be graded; only assignments uploaded via Brightspace will be marked.

Weekly assignment: *What does this article meme?*

- **10 submissions x 4% each = 40%**
- **Due the Friday of each topic week by noon via Brightspace.**
- **These assignments may not be submitted late.**

Students will select one of the required readings for the week (weeks 2 through 11) and create a meme that reflects the thesis or core themes of the reading. **Meme generators, as easy formatting tools, are permitted but the use of AI is strictly prohibited (in this and all assignments).**

In addition to the meme, students will write a one-page (1-inch margins, double spaced, size 12 Times New Roman) explanation of the relationship of the meme to the reading. All references to the reading and any other texts are expected to be properly cited and a properly formatted references page to be included.

This assignment takes the place of more typical reading summary assignments and asks students to apply both creative and abstract application of scholarly ideas to a non-academic audience, but also apply the developing knowledge about internet culture and mass communication in the digital age as we progress through the course.

The written component should explain the meme the student created in relation to the article selected from the required readings for the week. The thought process and creative choices should be commented on in addition to demonstrating engagement and understanding of the reading itself.

The meme and written summary components must both be submitted for marks to be awarded (i.e., submitting only a meme does not constitute a 50% grade on the assignment). Assignments will be awarded a letter grade and feedback to incorporate into future submissions.

Midterm: Online Harms Report

- 25%
- **Due date: Monday, February 24th by noon via Brightspace**

From the online consultation by the federal government in 2021 to the introduction of the bill to Canadian parliament in early 2024, the proposed Online Harms bill has highlighted a wide range of controversies, issues, and topics related to law in the information society. Described by the Government of Canada as:

a baseline standard for online platforms to keep Canadians safe—to hold online platforms accountable for the content they host., Bill C-63 will create stronger protections for kids online and better safeguard everyone in Canada from online hate. The bill sets out a new vision for safer and more inclusive participation online.¹

Following similar internet legislation in the U.K., E.U., and Australia, as well as the potential changes under the forthcoming second term of U.S. President Trump,² Canada joins other countries in trying to find a legislative solution to potential online harms. Liberal democracies must balance addressing and preventing harms with rights to free expression and political participation.

This assignment is a timely opportunity for students to apply their learning from the first half of the course to a case study in contemporary governance and legal issues in Canada. Students will develop their research and writing skills; crafting, supporting, and defending a central thesis; and applying both course materials and additional scholarly sources.

For this midterm assignment, students will select amongst pre-selected list of topics related to the proposed Online Harms bill currently under consideration in Canadian parliament and will write a 10-page report on the selected topic. Please see Brightspace assignments folder for additional details on topic options and rubric.

Students may contact the course instructor to pitch an alternative report topic related to the Online Harms bill and approval of alternative topics will be at the discretion of the instructor; students wishing to propose an alternative topic should do so well in advance of the assignment due date.

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/online-harms.html>

² See Gene Hamilton “Department of Justice,” in Paul Dan and Steven Grove (eds.)’s *Project 2025 Presidential Transition Project: Mandate for Leadership The Conservative Promise*, U.S.: The Heritage Foundation, pp. 545-579. Retrieved from: https://static.project2025.org/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULLL.pdf

Technical Requirements for Midterm Online Harms Report

Please note this is a checklist and not the assignment instructions; full instructions and rubric can be found on Brightspace.

- Please submit in Word format, i.e., .Doc or .Docx to ensure detailed feedback
- Title page: creative title (i.e., not midterm report or Online Harms report); student name and student number; course information; date submitted; title page should not be numbered nor counted
- Body pages: 10 pages; standard 1-inch margins, size 12 Times New Roman font, double spaced; no gaps between sections or paragraphs
- Students must engage with a minimum of 3 course readings and 3 additional academic sources
- Reports should demonstrate good understanding of course readings, concepts, theories and themes
- Reports should demonstrate a good understanding of selected topic/issue related to the Online Harms bill and its relationship to Law in the Information Society
- Headings and subheadings are permitted
- APA, ASA, or McGill citation styles
- Works cited or references page (in accordance with selected style)

Take home exam: Podcast/Vlog assignment

- **35%**
- **10-minute podcast or video submission**
- **April 26th by no later than noon**

Technical Requirements for Take Home Podcast/Vlog

For their take-home final exam in this course, students will create a 10-minute podcast or video (vlog) on a topic related to the course.

Given that this course is focused on Law in the Information Society and is running this term as an online asynchronous course and the world continues to expand further into multimedia communication and information distribution, it seems appropriate that the final for this course to develop and utilize presenting academic information in creative modalities for a wider audience.

Students will demonstrate their knowledge on a topic related to the course that they found interesting or are passionate about through approaches less focused on academic research and writing (as was accomplished by the Online Harms Midterm Report) and instead through audio and/or visual means of communication central to the information society we inhabit.

Please note this is a checklist and not the assignment instructions; full instructions and rubric can be found on Brightspace.

- ***Students are responsible for ensuring their file or link is functional; students may receive late penalties for delay in receiving operational submission***
- Students may submit either a video or audio file via Brightspace or may provide a link to the project hosted on YouTube or Spotify.
- Students should include a works cited or references page with all the materials and sources used and properly formatted in accordance with selected citation style
- Assignments will be evaluated on engagement and demonstrated understanding of course concepts, readings, and theories, etc.
- Assignments should reflect students' knowledge of course materials and key themes
- Students are encouraged to take a creative approach to this assignment
- Further details and rubric available on Brightspace

LAWS 3501A Law in the Information Society (Winter 2025)

A+ = 12.0	A+ = 6.0	A+ = 3.0	90-100%
A = 11.0	A = 5.5	A = 2.75	85-89%
A- = 10.0	A- = 5.0	A- = 2.5	80-84%
B+ = 9.0	B+ = 4.5	B+ = 2.25	77-79%
B = 8.0	B = 4.0	B = 2.0	73-76%
B- = 7.0	B- = 3.5	B- = 1.75	70-72%
C+ = 6.0	C+ = 3.0	C+ = 1.5	67-69%
C = 5.0	C = 2.5	C = 1.25	63-66%
C- = 4.0	C- = 2.0	C- = 1.0	60-62%
D+ = 3.0	D+ = 1.5	D+ = 0.75	57-59%
D = 2.0	D = 1.0	D = 0.5	53-56%
D- = 1.0	D- = 0.5	D- = 0.25	50-52%
F = 0.0	F = 0.0	F = 0.0	0-49%

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval 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 Dean.

Academic Integrity

[The University Academic Integrity Policy](#) defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This 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, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Academic dishonesty, in whatever form, is destructive to the values of the university, and risks harming the university’s reputation as place of learning and innovation. Furthermore, it is unfair and discouraging to those students who pursue their studies honestly.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT)
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own
- failing to acknowledge sources with proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty follows a rigorous process for academic integrity allegations, including reviewing documents and interviewing the student, when an instructor suspects a violation has been committed. Penalties for violations may include a final grade of "F" for the course.

Students in this course are prohibited from:

- Use AI, such as ChatGPT, to generate written or visual content
- Resubmit work previously submitted in part or whole in another course
- There is no collaborative or group work in this course

Dates to Note

- January 6th is first day of winter semester classes
- January 10th is the last day for registration and course changes
- January 31st is the last day to withdraw for full reimbursement
- February 1st is the last day for academic withdrawal (i.e., won't appear on transcript); also, the last day to request Formal Exam Accommodations with PMC
- **Monday, February 24th by noon Online Harms Midterm Report due**
- April 8th is the last day of winter term
- April 9th and 10th no classes or exams
- April 11th to 26th is the exam period (including weekends)
- **April 26th by noon Take-Home Exam Podcast/Vlog due**

Course Calendar

Week 1: January 8th

Introduction to Law in the Information Society

Boyle, James. (1995). "The information society," in *Shamans, Software, and Spleens: Law and the Construction of the Information Society*. Harvard University Press, pp. 1-16.

Gervassis, Nicholas. (2021). Information biopolitics: Copyright law and the regulation of life in the network society. *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology*, 35, 46-69.

Pasquale, Frank. (2020). "Introduction," in *New Laws of Robotics: Defending Human Expertise in the Age of AI*. Harvard University Press, pp. 1-32.

Week 2: January 15th

What Do You Meme Emojis?

Capelotti, João Paulo. (2020). The dangers of controlling meme through copyright law. *European Journal of Humour Research*, 3, 115-136.

Danesi, Marcel. (2021). The law and emojis: Emoji forensics. *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law*, 34, 1117-11139.

Wagner, Anne., Marusek, Sarah., and Yu, Wei. (2020). Emojis and law: Contextualized flexibility of meaning in cyber communication. *Social Semiotics*, 30(3), 396-414.

Week 3: January 22nd

Code, Language, and Semiotics

Chun, Wendy. (2008). On 'sorcery,' or code as fetish. *Configurations*, 16, 299-324.

Gray, Christopher B. (2009). The semiotics of memes in the law: Jack Balkin's promise of legal semiotics. *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law*, 22, 411-424.

Petersen, Jennifer. (2015). Is code speech? Law and the expressivity of machine language. *new media & society*, 17(3), 415-431.

Week 4: January 29th

Conspiracy, Deepfakes, Fake News

De Zeeuw, Daniel., and Gekker, Alex. (2023). A God-tier LARP? QAnon as conspiracy fictioning. *Social media + society*, 9(1), 1-14.

Katz, Ariel. (2023). Sedating democracy's watchdogs: Critical reflections on Canada's proposed Online News Act. *The Columbia Journal of Law & the Arts*, 46(3), 345-368.

Yamaoka-Enkerlin, Anna. (2020). Disrupting disinformation: Deepfakes and the law. *New York University Journal of Legislation and Public Policy*, 22(3), 725-750.

Week 5: February 5th

The World of Online Harms (Part I)

Bechtold, Eliza. (2024). Regulating online harms: An examination of recent developments in the UK and the US through a free speech lens. *Journal of Media Law*, 1-33.

Buiten, Miriam C., de Streel, Alexandre., and Peitz, Martin. (2020). Rethinking liability rules for online hosting platforms. *International Journal of Law and Information Technology*, 28, 139-1166.

Stjernfelt, F., and Lauritzen, A. M. (2020). "Facebook and Google as offices of censorship," in *Your Post Has Been Removed: Tech Giants and Freedom of Speech*. Springer International Publishing, pp. 139-172.

Week 6: February 12th

Canada and Online Harms (Part II)

Gosse, Chandell, and Burkell, Jacquelyn. (2020). Politics and porn: How news media characterizes problems presented by deepfakes. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 37(5), 497-511.

Lonergan, Meg D. (2023). Consuming ghost stories: The spectre of snuff films is haunting Canadian obscenity. *Annual Review of Interdisciplinary Justice*, 12, 146-177.

Vera-Gray, Fiona., McGlynn, Clare., Kureshi, Ibad., and Butterby, Kate. (2021). Sexual violence as a sexual script in mainstream online pornography. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 61, 1243-1260.

Reading week: February 17th to 21st

Monday, February 24th
Online Harms Report due by noon via Brightspace

Week 7: February 26th

Science Fiction, Speculative Fiction, and the Importance of the Weird

Davis, Roger. (2018). Food for thoughts: Thinking through cannibals and plagiarists. *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 87(1), 176-195.

Manning, Paul. (2024). Before creepypasta: Folklore, newspapers, and the Weird Tale. *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural*, 13(2), 258-288.

Olivereira, Ana. (2020). Subject (in) trouble: Humans, robots, and legal imagination. *Laws*, 9(10)1-16.

Week 8: March 5th

Automation, AI, and Machine-Learning

Bibal, Adrien., Lognoul, Michael., de Streel, Alexandre., and Frénay, Benoît. (2021). Legal requirements on explainability in machine learning. *Artificial Intelligence and Law*, 29, 149-169.

Chaiao, Vincent. (2018). Predicting proportionality: The case for algorithmic sentencing. *Criminal Justice Ethics*, 37(3), 238-261.

Lee, Jaewook. (2024). Luddite or technophile?—policy preferences for governing technology-driven economic change. *Socio-Economic Review*, 22(3), 1019-1046.

Week 9: March 12th

Robots, Cyborgs, and Posthumanism

DiTecco, Delphine., and Karaian, Lara. (2023). New technology, same old stigma: Media narratives of sex robots and sex work. *Sexuality & Culture*, 27, 539-569.

Kaswan, K. S., Dhatteerwal, J. S., Baliyan, A., and Rani, S. (2023). "Cyborg: An introduction," in Kuldeep Singh Kaswan, Jagjit Singh Dhatteerwal, Anupam Baliyan, and Shalli Rani (eds.)'s *Cyborg: Human and Machine Communication Paradigm*. CRC Press, pp. 1-25.

Susen, Simon. (2021). Reflections on the (post-)human condition: Towards new forms of engagement with the world? *Social Epistemology: A Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Policy*, 36,63-94.

Week 10: March 19th

Data, Security, and Privacy

Barrera, Meagan., and Labrin, Danny Rayman. (2023). Protecting reproductive rights post-Roe: Can companies keep your data safe? *Business and Human Rights Journal*, 8, 259-264.

Bernot, Ausma., Cooney-O'Donoghue, Diarmuid., and Mann, Monique. (2023). Governing Chinese technologies, TikTok, foreign interference, and technological sovereignty. *Internet Policy Review: Journal on Internet Regulation*, 13(1), 2-26.

Tatar, Unal., Gokce, Yasir., and Nussbaum, Brian. (2020). Law versus technology: Blockchain, GDPR, and tough tradeoffs. *Computer Law & Security Review*, 38, 1-11.

Week 11: March 26th

Crypto, NFTs, and Stonks

Çağlayan Aksoy, Pinar. (2023). The application of property law rules for crypto assets: Considerations from civil law and common law perspectives. *Law, Innovation and Technology*, 15(1), 185-221.

Grey, Michelle. (2024). Understanding the MetaBirkin: Trademark law and an appropriate legal standard for NFTs. *The Columbia Journal of Law and the Arts*, 47(4), 619-642.

Guan, Sue S. (2022). Meme investors and retail risk. *Boston College Law Review*, 63(7), 2051-2110.

Week 12: April 2nd

Why The Tortoise of Law Will Never Catch the Technology Hare

Bruno, Luigi, & Spano, Isabella. (2021). Post-quantum encryption and privacy regulation: can the law keep pace with technology? *European Journal of Privacy Law & Technologies*, 1, 72-81.

Greely, Henry T. (2022). Governing emerging technologies—looking forward with horizons scanning and looking back with technology audits. *Global Public Policy and Governance*, 2, 266-282.

Tranter, Kieran. (2021). Disrupting technology disrupting law. *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, 17(2), 158-171.

April 26th by noon Take-Home Exam Podcast/Vlog due

Mental Health & Resources

As a University student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you.

For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>

Emergency Resources (on and off campus):

- <https://wellness.carleton.ca/get-help-now/>

Carleton Resources:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows.

Pregnancy Obligation and Family-Status Related Accommodations

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 about the accommodation policy, visit the [Equity and Inclusive Communities \(EIC\)](#) website.

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, please go to: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/discrimination-harassment/religious-spiritual-observances/>.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. You can find the Paul Menton Centre online at: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

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 to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

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 where 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/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

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. Read more here: <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>.

For more information on academic accommodation, please visit: <https://students.carleton.ca/services/accommodation/>.

Academic Consideration for Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances

Due to medical and other extenuating circumstances, students may occasionally be unable to fulfill the academic requirements of their course(s) in a timely manner. The University supports the academic development of students and aims to provide a fair environment for students to succeed academically. Medical and/or other extenuating circumstances are circumstances that are beyond a student's control, have a significant impact on the student's capacity to meet their academic obligations, and could not have reasonably been prevented.

Students must contact the instructor(s) as soon as possible, and normally no later than 24 hours after the submission deadline for course deliverables. If not satisfied with the instructor's decision, students can conduct an "informal appeal" to the Chair of the department within three (3) working days of an instructor's decision. We have created a webform specifically for appeals to the Chair, which can be found here: <https://carleton.ca/law/application-for-review-of-refusal-to-provide-academic-consideration/>. *Note: This form only applies to LAWS courses and is not the same as a formal appeal of grade.* More information about the academic consideration can be found [here](#).