

Course Outline

COURSE:	FYSM 1502 A – Selected Topics in Legal Studies: Exploring the Sociolegal Imagination & Cultural Approaches to Law
TERM:	FALL/WINTER 2024-2025
PREREQUISITES:	Normally restricted to students entering the first year of a B.A., B.Cog.Sc. or the B.G.In.S. program
CLASS:	Day & Time: Thursdays, 11:35 – 14:25 Room: Please check Carleton Central for current Class Schedule. Note this is an “in person” course so you must attend the class to have access to the class materials and to complete the core course components.
INSTRUCTOR:	Stephen J. Tasson
CONTACT:	Office: Room C567 Loeb Building Office Hrs: Wednesday 10-12pm (in my office) or by appointment Email: steve.tasson@carleton.ca

CALENDAR COURSE DESCRIPTION

Selected topics in legal studies.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What does it mean to talk about the socio-legal imagination? When we think of what law “is” and how it operates in our society what images come to mind? What institutions (e.g. the courtroom, the prison, bureaucracy, etc.)? What language (e.g. justice, order, remorse, punishment, etc.) do think with when we think of law? *Who* do we think about? How does our practical *experience* of law compare to these images?

This course aims to introduce and explore these questions. We do this by looking at some of the most influential and persistent constructions of “the law” and legal action, and the enduring debates that some of these idealizations provoked. As students interested in law and legal studies, this course will challenge you to examine your own views of where and how we locate law in our societies. Students who take this course should be prepared to explore these questions through open and structured discussion, oral presentations, close readings of texts, short written work, and structured essays.

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. We explore what methodological approaches provide us with the clearest picture of “the law” and tackle questions 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?

In the second half of the course, we devote considerable time to thinking about how most people today understand and “experience” law. We explore the merits of more recent “cultural approaches” to studying law in society. What is our daily “experience” of the law and how might who we are change this experience? How do depictions of law (through media, movies, novels, short stories etc.) impact the ways many people in our society understand the operation and legitimacy of legal actors and institutions?

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 many academic disciplines. A central aspect of the first part of the course will be to discuss some of the debates about the value and pitfalls of this type of “inclusive” approach to the study of law. Do we leave law to the lawyers? Or do we all have a stake defining 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 through other disciplines (e.g. sociology, philosophy, political theory, gender studies, etc). 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/theoretical constructions of law, justice, and “legality”.
2. Recognize the value of theoretical approaches to academic debates and the practical consequences that arise from these debates (i.e. the ideological power of certain “ways of knowing”).
3. Read some key texts in the fields of jurisprudence, “law and literature” and “legal cultural studies”. Be capable of reading and connecting current social issues and reform initiatives through these approaches.
4. Develop and hone your ability to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of written arguments. Use these skills to reflect on and improve your own written work.
5. Improve your ability to structure and communicate your own ideas and arguments both orally and in writing.
6. Use collaborative approaches in the writing process and academic problem-solving (i.e., get the most out of instructor and peer feedback)

REQUIRED TEXTS

There is **NO required textbook** for this course. All of **the required materials will be available through the course’s Brightspace** page.

NOTE: Students may be required to purchase a reference text in the **Winter Term** but this will be confirmed before the end of the **Fall term**.

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 (50%)

Fall Notebook (4 entries)	12%	(Continuous)
Position Paper #1	10%	(due 11:55pm October 18th)
Position Paper #2	10%	(due 11:55pm December 21th)
Class Engagement/Participation	15%	(Continuous)
End-of-term Reflection (2 parts)	3%	(due 11:55pm December 21th)

Winter Term (50%)

Winter Notebook (4 entries)	12%	(Continuous)
Position Paper #3	10%	(due 11:55pm February 14th)
Position Paper #4	10%	(due 11:55pm April 26th)
Class Engagement/Participation	15%	(Continuous)
End-of-term Reflection (2 parts)	3%	(due 11:55pm April 26th)

COURSE COMPONENTS**Fall and Winter Notebooks (12%+12%)**

Select weeks on Brightspace there is a short set of questions that asks you to reflect on the course materials for that week (in class material or “readings”). The aim of this course component is that you complete a short summary or reflective piece of writing engaging/reflecting 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 reflect on the texts we discuss more creatively, to draw connections to current events, or even connect the sources to your own experience.

The aim of the four “notebook entries” is also, in part, to encourage you to develop the habit of taking “good notes” when you read and interact during class. This course component also measures your overall engagement with the course. The entries are less about providing “perfect” summaries or getting the “right” answer but rather to demonstrate to me your “engagement” with the sources (some readings may raise more questions for you than they answer! This is an important step in the learning process and something you can discuss).

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**.

More formatting and rubric details appear on Brightspace but generally you should expect each “entry” to be approx. **2-3 pages double-spaced in length**. Like other written components of the course, these entries are submitted via Brightspace and must be submitted before the deadlines indicated there.

Position Papers (10%+10%+10%+10%)

There are four “short” papers due throughout the course. Like the notebook entries, these papers ask you to summarize, synthesize and analyze some questions arising from the material we investigate in the course. They are more **formal** than the notebooks and more emphasis is placed on mastering paper conventions (e.g. structuring arguments, citations, etc). The Fall papers are weighted more toward summative elements (demonstrating understanding). In the Winter term the grade-weighting shifts slightly toward developing analysis.

Each paper’s length is **approx. 5-6 double-spaced pages (though this does vary)**. The specific requirements, questions, format, and rubrics for evaluation will be outlined in the assignment sheets (available well in advance of the deadlines on Brightspace). There will be opportunities in class to discuss paper expectations, citation concerns, and other general tips to assure your best grades on this component.

We will spend class time talking about the planning and revision processes for term papers. You should expect that marks for these papers will be derived not only from the final product but also by **demonstrating attention to the processes of planning and revision**.

Class Engagement (15% + 15%)

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 to attend our in-class sessions and be prepared to participate in discussions and any assigned activities within the session (this may include student PRESENTATIONS)

Your “Class Engagement” grade is based on these criteria (a more detailed guide/rubric for “participation” is available on Brightspace):

A) Basic attendance

You are expected to attend scheduled sessions. This sets the baseline for your grade. If you miss 20% of the scheduled classes then you should not expect this component grade to exceed 80%. If you expect to be absent for justified reasons you should discuss with me asap.

B) The quality of your contribution to weekly class discussions 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 that you read/watch in advance). Quality participation is also 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/class writing.

End-of-term Reflection (3%+3%)

At the end of each term I will ask you to complete a more formal reflection exercise on Brightspace to discuss **your specific contributions** and progress in the course (and first-year generally). Part of these reflections also asks you to discuss the contributions of **your peers** within the course (particularly in the context of small and

larger group discussions). I may also ask that you meet with me to discuss your progress. As with all other components we will discuss this in more detail in class.

SCHEDULE (FALL & WINTER 2024-2025)

The complete **Required Reading and Weekly Topics schedule** is **available on Brightspace**. We will discuss this schedule in some detail in the first classes of term. If you have any questions or concerns about these topics or readings, please let me know via email. Please also note these other important University FALL and WINTER term dates:

September 4 – Fall term begins

September 17 -- Last day for registration and course changes in fall and fall/winter courses

September 30 -- Last day to withdraw from full fall and fall/winter courses with a full fee adjustment

October 14 – Statutory holiday (Thanksgiving)

October 21 – 25 - Fall Term Break

December 6 – Last Day of Fall Term Classes & Last Day to hand in Fall Term work

December 9 – 21 – Formally Scheduled exams take place

December 24 – January 2 – University Closed

January 6 – Winter term begins

February 17 – Statutory holiday (Family Day)

February 17 – 21 - Winter Term Break

March 7 – Last day for academic withdrawal from full winter, late winter, and fall/winter courses

April 8 – Last Day of Winter Term Classes & Last Day to hand in course work.

April 11 – 26 – Formally Scheduled exams take place

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

1. Attend class and contribute!

You can't participate if you are not attending class and contributing -- and this is **a big part** of your mark. Frequent smaller assignments force you to "stay on top of" weekly work. I realize that this provides you less flexibility but, again, the aim is to keep you engaged and prevent you from falling too far behind or feeling overwhelmed if you must miss class meetings.

2. Get it in!!!

The stakes on any individual written component are fairly LOW (10% or less of the course grade).

Perfection is the enemy of completion! Get written work in and get feedback on how to improve. (I know this is FAR easier than it sounds for many folks, but it is a valuable lesson in first year!)

3. Ask for help if you need help or any course requirements are unclear!

My role is not to make your life miserable (honest!). I want you to succeed in the course and come out the other end better informed and better prepared to tackle the challenges of your upper-year courses! While it may feel sometimes that you are "on your own", you are not. You should contact me to discuss concerns or struggles. **Early communication is key!**

You are also part of a "class" and you should not underestimate the value of peer support and academic community. Don't be afraid to get to know your peers and ask (and answer) 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 and disseminating knowledge and 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 differently. In this class the source of these challenges may be the course materials (my “lectures” or the readings) but they may also come through interactions with your peers in class. Not everyone is equally skilled in expressing their positions or posing questions. Be attentive to this fact, to the diversity of other student’s experiences, and be “generous” in attributing motives to others in the class. Personal attacks will not be tolerated.

UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

Please review the following webpage to ensure that your practices meet our Department’s expectations, particularly regarding standard departmental protocols and academic integrity requirements:

<https://carleton.ca/law/student-experience-resources/>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (& 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. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. More information on the University’s Academic Integrity Policy can be found at:

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

A NOTE on Generative AI Tools (eg., ChatGPT, etc)

Unless explicitly permitted for a specific assignment, any use of generative AI tools to produce assessed content is considered a violation of academic integrity standards.

STATEMENT ON STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

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/>

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** (<https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline/>).

For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy Obligation and Family-Status Related Accommodations

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 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 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.

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.

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/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. <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/>

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 1” margins. Assignments normally must include your name and student number and the course code in the document’s header. Any 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 Brightspace 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.**

*****ASSIGNMENT REVIEW**

I reserve the right to ask you to submit all assignment preliminary drafts and notes made toward completing your assignments, and I may request you orally summarize/explain any work submitted for a grade in this class. Failure to participate in this course-specific review process may have an adverse effect on your assignment grade.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS & EXTENSIONS POLICY

LATE ASSIGNMENTS will normally be penalized 3% per day that it remains unsubmitted (e.g. a paper marked as a 68% that was 1 day late would receive a grade 65%) (unless otherwise specified on the assignment instructions). Late assignments must be submitted normally through Brightspace unless you are otherwise directed.

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

Extension requests

There may be instances where for **legitimate reasons beyond your control** you are unable to submit work in advance of the deadline and where accommodations are warranted.

Extension requests must normally be communicated to me **in advance of the assignment deadline OR no later than 24hrs after the deadline has past**. Frantic email requests on the eve of a deadline or a week after are unlikely to receive a favorable reply. For requests for extensions lasting **less than 7 days**, please complete the

form at the following link and submit it to me (Steve) with your request. <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-consideration-coursework-form/> (be sure to read this form carefully).

For more information regarding academic consideration for short-term incapacitation (illness, injury, or extraordinary circumstances beyond a student's control), please visit the following link:

<https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline/#academic-consideration-for-short-term-incapacitation>

In extraordinary cases where a **requested extension lasts longer than 7 days** (e.g. in the case of prolonged medical or other serious issues), students will normally be required to provide additional information to justify the extension. **OPEN COMMUNICATION WITH ME REGARDING LATES/EXTENSIONS IS VITAL!**

*****PLEASE ALSO NOTE***:** Late and extended assignments WILL NOT be graded and “returned” along normal timelines and the quantity of feedback may also be affected.

INFORMAL ASSIGNMENT APPEALS

Students may believe that errors have been made in course assessments or that the justification for assessment grades are unclear or feedback is insufficient. In any case, students may request that their work be **reviewed**. You should initiate an appeal with a week of receiving the disputed grade/feedback.

REFERENCING & PLAGIARISM (Part II)

All 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 (even imperfectly).

As highlighted above, failure to reference properly, using generative AI (without clear attribution), or attempting to pass someone else's ideas or work off as your own constitutes plagiarism (whether intentional or just careless). Both the university and I take it very seriously – and so should you. Plagiarism will 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 or incorporate sources in preparing your work in the course, it is far better to contact me and talk to me about resources to help!