

Course Outline

COURSE:	LAWS 4303A – Drugs, the User and the State
TERM:	Fall 2026
PREREQUISITES:	LAWS 2908, CRCJ 3001, or CRCJ 3002, and 0.5 credit from LAWS 2301 or LAWS 2302, and fourth-year Honours standing.
CLASS:	Day & Time: Wednesday 6:05pm – 8:55pm (in-person) Room: Please check Carleton Central for current Class Schedule
INSTRUCTOR:	Dr. Jamie Brownlee
CONTACT:	Office: A209 Loeb Office Hrs: Wednesday 5:00pm – 6:00pm (in-person) Telephone: 613-899-2193 Email: jamielbrownlee@cunet.carleton.ca
BRIGHTSPACE:	https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/450784

CALENDAR COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the state's attempts to control drugs and drug users by exploring different aspects of national and international drug control. The Canadian experience of drug control, viewed from different perspectives, will be explored within a broader socio-legal context.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers a critical examination of contemporary drug policy and control, focusing on today's "psychedelic renaissance." After decades of stigma and prohibition, psychedelics are receiving renewed scientific, cultural and legal attention, reshaping how these substances are understood and regulated. This course examines drug policy and control within the context of corporatization, medicalization and the war on drugs. We will look at questions such as: how medicalization is redefining public and institutional understandings of psychedelics and influencing their availability across diverse legal frameworks; how politicians, corporations, venture capitalists and drug reform activists are shaping the modern psychedelic landscape; how researchers and biotechnology firms pursue intellectual property claims over psychedelic compounds and appropriate Indigenous knowledge; and how medicalization, legalization and decriminalization initiatives are transforming the legal terrain across North America. The course concludes by looking at broader movements challenging drug prohibition, including decriminalization and harm reduction efforts. Overall, the course equips students to critically assess the power dynamics driving contemporary drug policy and the legal transformations unfolding within it.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the social, political and legal forces shaping contemporary debates around psychedelics and drug policy in Canada and around the world.
- Analyze how corporate actors and the pharmaceutical industry influence the development and implementation of drug policy reform.
- Examine the regulatory, commercial and cultural factors that shape access to psychedelic substances and related therapies.
- Critically assess the implications of emerging legal frameworks in this area for public health, civil liberties and social justice.
- Evaluate the movements working to change drug laws and promote alternative approaches to criminalization, harm reduction and regulation.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Students are not required to purchase textbooks or other learning materials for this course. All assigned readings will be available through Brightspace.

COURSE EVALUATION

1. CLASS PARTICIPATION, ATTENDANCE & PRESENTATION 25%

This is a reading-intensive course. Students are strongly encouraged to keep up with the assigned readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. This is also a student-driven course, meaning that students are expected to be active participants. The grade for this requirement will be distributed over three kinds of participation throughout the term: class participation, attendance and a presentation.

Presentation: Seminar participants will be expected to present on the readings and facilitate seminar discussions once during the term. The presentations will be done in groups. The purpose of the presentation is to briefly review and analyze the main arguments and themes presented in the readings, and then stimulate class discussion. Oral presentations should be approximately 15-20 minutes. *Please note:* this time recommendation refers to the length of the presentation by the entire group, not each individual student. Presentations will begin the second week of the course.

2. SHORT ASSIGNMENT, DUE OCTOBER 7TH 20%

This short assignment paper will give students the opportunity to analyze an emerging legal issue or reform initiative involving psychedelics. The paper should be approximately 6-7 double-spaced pages. Late papers will be penalized 5 percent per day. Additional information will be provided in class.

3. ***CRITICAL REACTION PAPER, DUE ON THE SELECTED WEEK*** **20%**

The critical reaction paper will involve writing a critically reflective paper of approximately 6-7 double-spaced pages on all the readings from one of the weeks during the term. The paper should briefly summarize some of the main arguments of the readings and then *analyze* the arguments within them. The point of the paper is to allow for a more sustained engagement with a topic that especially interests you. No other sources are expected to be used in the writing of this paper. Papers are due on the selected week and should be submitted electronically by the end of the day on Wednesday (the day of our class). Please note that for the critical reaction paper, students are required to choose one of the weeks when they are *not* presenting on the readings.

4. ***FINAL PAPER, DUE DECEMBER 9TH*** **35%**

Students will select their own topic, understanding that it must be relevant to the issues addressed in the seminar. While the paper can engage with some of the weekly readings, it should also reference additional academic sources. It should be approximately 12-15 double-spaced pages. Papers will be graded on the quality of your research and writing, the strength of your analysis and arguments, and your ability to situate your arguments within existing debates. Students are encouraged to discuss paper topics with me at any point during the term. Late papers will be penalized 5 percent per day. Additional information will be provided in class.

Please retain a **copy** of all work that is submitted.

POLICY ON LATE PENALTIES AND REQUESTS FOR EXTENSIONS

As noted above, the late penalty for written assignments is 5 percent per day. The granting of extensions is at the discretion of the instructor, who will confirm whether an extension is approved and its duration. For information about requesting short-term or long-term extensions, deferrals for final exams, or academic consideration due to illness, injury, or other extraordinary circumstances, please visit the Academic Consideration Policy page. All requests must be submitted to the instructor before the assignment due date or, in the case of exam deferrals, directly to the Registrar's Office. Full details and instructions can be found here: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-consideration-policy/>.

POLICY ON GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Minimal Use – Basic Assistance Only

AI use in this course: Students may use AI tools for basic word processing functions, including grammar and spell checking (e.g. Grammarly, Microsoft Word Editor, Copilot)

Documenting AI use: It is not necessary to document the use of AI for the permitted purposes listed above. If you have questions about a specific use of AI that isn't listed above, please

consult your instructor.

Why have I adopted this policy? This policy ensures that student voices and ideas are prioritized and authentically represented, maintaining the integrity of the work produced by students while allowing basic support to enhance clarity and layout. The goal of adopting a limited use of AI is to help students develop foundational skills in writing and critical thinking by practicing substantive content creation without the support of AI.

As our understanding of the uses of AI and its relationship to student work and academic integrity continue to evolve, students are required to discuss their use of AI in any circumstance not described here with the course instructor to ensure it supports the learning goals for the course.

GRADES

In accordance with the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar, the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52
F = Below 50			

WDN = Withdrawn from the course

Final Grade Approval

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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE – SEPTEMBER 9TH INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

- Course overview, lectures, readings and assignments
- Presentation schedule

WEEK TWO – SEPTEMBER 16TH THE ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF THE WAR ON DRUGS

READINGS

- Mike Jay. 2023. “Before Drugs” in *Psychonauts: Drugs and the Making of the Modern Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pp. 1-16.
- Susan Boyd, Connie Carter and Donald MacPherson. 2017. “A Brief History of Drug Laws and Policy in Canada” in *More Harm than Good: Drug Policy in Canada*. Halifax: Fernwood. pp. 17-26.
- Craig Reinerman. 1994. “The Social Construction of Drug Scares” in *Constructions of Deviance: Social Power, Context, and Interaction*. California: Wadsworth. pp. 155-165.

WEEK THREE – SEPTEMBER 23RD FROM COUNTERCULTURE TO MAINSTREAM: TODAY’S PSYCHEDELIC RENAISSANCE

READINGS

- Michael Pollan. 2018. “A New Door” and “A Renaissance” in *How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence*. London: Penguin. pp. 1-17; 21-31.
- Danielle Giffort. 2020. “Turn On, Tune In, and Go to the Bake Sale: Tensions Between Mainstream Science and the Psychedelic Counterculture” in *Acid Revival: The Psychedelic Renaissance and the Quest for Medical Legitimacy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. pp. 135-161.
- Beatriz Labate, Henrique Antunes, Jamie Beachy, Jordan Sloshower and Clancy Cavnar. 2025. “Navigating the Mainstreaming of Psychedelics.” *Journal of Psychedelic Studies* 9(2): 108-115.

WEEK FOUR – SEPTEMBER 30TH**THE POLITICS OF ALTERED STATES: PSYCHEDELICS AND SOCIAL CHANGE****READINGS**

- Martin Lee and Bruce Shlain. 1994. “Peaking in Babylon” in *Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD: The CIA, the Sixties, and Beyond*. New York: Grove Press. pp. 194-222.
- Nin Kirkham and Chris Letheby. 2022. “Psychedelics and Environmental Virtues.” *Philosophical Psychology* 37(2): 371-395.
- Russell Hausfeld. 2022. “A Long Strange Loop.” *Truthdig*, November 1. pp. 1-16.

WEEK FIVE – OCTOBER 7TH**PSYCHEDELIC MEDICALIZATION: EVIDENCE, HYPE AND COMPETING KNOWLEDGE CLAIMS****READINGS**

- Michael Pollan. 2015. “The Trip Treatment.” *The New Yorker*, February 9. pp. 36-47.
- Tehseen Noorani. 2020. “Making Psychedelics into Medicines: The Politics and Paradoxes of Medicalization.” *Journal of Psychedelic Studies* 4(1): 34-39.
- James Davies, Brian Pace and Neşe Devenot. 2023. “Beyond the Psychedelic Hype: Exploring the Persistence of the Neoliberal Paradigm.” *Journal of Psychedelic Studies* 7(S1): 9-21.

WEEK SIX – OCTOBER 14TH**DRUG LAWS AND DRUG HARMS: ASSESSING THE SAFETY AND RISKS OF PSYCHEDELICS AND OTHER SUBSTANCES****READINGS**

- David Nutt. 2020. “Is Ecstasy More Dangerous than Horse Riding?” in *Drugs Without the Hot Air: Making Sense of Legal and Illegal Drugs*. Cambridge: UIT Cambridge. pp. 10-36.
- David Nutt. 2020 “How Can We Measure the Harms Done by Drugs?” in *Drugs Without the Hot Air: Making Sense of Legal and Illegal Drugs*. Cambridge: UIT Cambridge. pp. 37-61.
- Carl Hart. 2021. “Dope Science: The Truth about Opioids” in *Drug Use for Grown-Ups: Chasing Liberty in the Land of Fear*. New York: Penguin. pp. 221-244.

WEEK SEVEN – OCTOBER 21ST**COMMODYING CONSCIOUSNESS: THE RISE OF PSYCHEDELIC CAPITALISM****READINGS**

- Ido Hartogsohn. 2023. “The Corporadelic Set and Setting: On the Consequences of Psychedelic Commodification.” *History of Pharmacy and Pharmaceuticals* 65(1): 131-140.
- Johan Söderberg. 2022. “The Psychedelic Renaissance: A Case of Outlaw User Innovation in the Pharmaceutical Industry.” *Prometheus* 38(4): 385-398.
- Sandy Brian Hager. 2025. “The Shifting Fortunes of Corporate Psychedelia.” *Finance and Society*. OnlineFirst: 1-23.

OCTOBER 28TH – FALL BREAK, NO CLASS**WEEK EIGHT – NOVEMBER 4TH****OPTIMIZING THE MIND: COMMERCIALIZATION, TECH CULTURE AND THE CORPORATE WELLNESS INDUSTRY****READINGS**

- Maxim Tvorun-Dunn. 2022. “Acid Liberalism: Silicon Valley’s Enlightened Technocrats, and the Legalization of Psychedelics.” *International Journal of Drug Policy* 110: 1-9.
- Patrick Elf, Amy Isham and Dario Leoni. 2023. “Moving Forward by Looking Back: Critiques of Commercialized Mindfulness and the Future of (Commercialized) Psychedelics.” *History of Pharmacy and Pharmaceuticals* 65(1): 33-62.
- Mark Hay. 2020. “The Colonization of the Ayahuasca Experience.” *JSTOR Daily*, November 4. pp. 1-9.

WEEK NINE – NOVEMBER 11TH**PSYCHEDELIC ENCLOSURE: PATENTS, MONOPOLIES AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW****READINGS**

- Mason Marks and Glenn Cohen. 2022. “Patents on Psychedelics: The Next Legal Battlefield of Drug Development.” *Harvard Law Review Forum* 135: 212-235.
- Shayla Love. 2022. “Psychedelic Patents are Broken Because the Patent System is Broken.” *VICE*, May 9. pp. 1-12.

- Shahin Shams, Amanda Pratt, Sisi Li and Tom Isenbarger. 2023. “The Evolving Role of History in the Past, Present, and Future of Psychedelic Patenting.” *History of Pharmacy and Pharmaceuticals* 65(1): 117-130.

WEEK TEN – NOVEMBER 18TH

THE FUTURE OF PSYCHEDELIC LAW: POLICY SHIFTS AND REGULATORY REFORM ACROSS NORTH AMERICA

READINGS

- Agnieszka Doll. 2024. “Making ‘Medical’: How Psychedelics Are Becoming Legal in Canada.” *Dalhousie Law Journal* 47(1): 83-119.
- Claudia Schwarz-Plaschg. 2022. “Socio-Psychedelic Imaginaries: Envisioning and Building Legal Psychedelic Worlds in the United States.” *European Journal of Futures Research* 10(1): 1-16.
- Emma Garrod and Katrina Blommaert. 2023. “Intersecting Cultures: Exploring Ayahuasca's Legal and Ethical Journey in Canada” in *Religious Freedom and the Global Regulation of Ayahuasca*. London: Routledge. pp. 51-68.

WEEK ELEVEN – NOVEMBER 25TH

ENDING THE WAR ON DRUGS: DECRIMINALIZATION, LEGALIZATION AND HARM REDUCTION

READINGS

- Michael Pollan. 2021. “How Should We Do Drugs Now?” *The New York Times*. July 9. pp. 1-12.
- Brian Earp, Jonathan Lewis and Carl Hart, with Bioethicists and Allied Professionals for Drug Policy Reform. 2021. “Racial Justice Requires Ending the War on Drugs.” *American Journal of Bioethics* 21(4): 4-19.
- Eris Nyx and Jeremy Kalicum. 2024. “A Case Study of the DULF Compassion Club and Fulfillment Centre – A Logical Step Forward in Harm Reduction.” *International Journal of Drug Policy* 131: 1-11.

WEEK TWELVE – DECEMBER 2ND

- Final Paper Review and Feedback

WEEK THIRTEEN – DECEMBER 9TH

- Submit Final Paper

Fall 2026 Sessional Dates and University Closures	
<i>Please find a full list of important academic dates on the calendar website:</i> https://calendar.carleton.ca/academicyear/	
September 9, 2026	Fall term begins.
September 22, 2026	Last day for registration and course changes (including auditing) in full fall, late fall, and fall/winter courses.
September 30, 2026	Last day to withdraw from full fall courses and the fall portion of fall/winter courses with a full fee adjustment.
October 12, 2026	Statutory holiday. University closed.
October 26-30, 2026	Fall break. No classes.
November 15, 2026	Last day for academic withdrawal from full and late fall courses.
	Last day to request Formal Examination Accommodations for December full fall, late fall, and fall/winter midterm examinations from the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities. Note that it may not be possible to fulfil accommodation requests received after the specified deadlines.
November 27, 2026	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in full fall term or fall/winter undergraduate courses, before the official December final examination period.
December 11, 2026	Fall term ends.
	Last day of fall classes.
	Classes follow a Monday schedule.
	Last day for take home examinations to be assigned.
December 9-10, 2026	No classes or examinations take place.
December 12-23, 2026	Final examinations in fall term courses and mid-term examinations in fall/winter courses will be held.
December 23, 2026	All final take-home examinations are due on this day, with the exception of those conforming to the examination regulations in the Academic Regulations of the University section of the Undergraduate Calendar/General Regulations of the Graduate Calendar.

STATEMENTS ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Policy on Submitting Duplicate Work

In this course, students are not permitted to submit the same piece of work from another course for academic credit. If you have any questions about this policy, please feel free to contact me.

Policy on Group/Collaborative Work

For all written assignments, students are expected to complete their work individually. However, collaboration is permitted and encouraged for the group presentations.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM

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, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, computer reports, material on the internet and/or conversations.

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.

STATEMENT ON STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

As a 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](#))

- Crisis/Urgent Counselling Support: 613-520-6674 (Mon-Fri, 8:30-4:30)
- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1

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: call 613-238-3311, text 343-306-5550, or connect online at <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: call 613-722-6914 or toll-free 1-866-996-0991, or connect online at <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Good2Talk: call 1-866-925-5454 or connect online at <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: for online or on-site service <https://walkincounselling.com>

REQUESTS FOR 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 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](#).