

Course Outline

COURSE:	LAWS 4903 A – Law, Society, and AI
TERM:	Fall 2026
PREREQUISITES:	LAWS 2908 and fourth year Honours standing
CLASS:	Day & Time: Tuesday 2:35 – 5:25pm Room: Please check Carleton Central for current Class Schedule (in-person seminar)
INSTRUCTOR:	Dr. Michael Christensen
CONTACT:	Office Hrs: Tuesdays 1:30pm – 2:30pm, or by appointment Email: michaelchristensen@cunet.carleton.ca
BRIGHTSPACE:	https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/450804

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines some of the socio-legal issues related to the recent expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The course will be organized as a seminar and each week we will discuss foundational topics in the growing field of AI studies. The readings will be multidisciplinary, with an emphasis on questions about the social impact of AI technologies ranging from practical issues regarding copyright and training models, to larger more existential questions about the future of work and human interaction in the AI era. The course will consider many perspectives and voices that are currently impacting debates about AI, including academic, industry, media, and activist perspectives. The goal of the course is to provide a platform for understanding the latest developments in AI products and technologies from a socio-legal academic perspective.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The topics presented in this course will help students achieve the following learning objectives:

1. Develop a basic understanding of how artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have evolved in the past decades, as well as a general understanding of how most AI technologies work.
2. Develop a critical understanding of how advances in AI have disrupted, challenged or reframed our understandings of a range of social and legal issues.
3. Learn how to read and analyze complex academic research articles about these technologies from a socio-legal studies perspective.
4. Advance oral discussion and presentation skills, and become more comfortable communicating complex ideas related to the topic of AI technology.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- All course readings will be posted on Brightspace, on the course Perusall page, and will be available on the library's ARES page for the course. Students are not required to purchase textbooks or other learning materials for this course.

EVALUATION

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 and the Dean.

Evaluation Components

<u>Type</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date(s) Due</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Perusall Comments	Written comments	Weekly	10%
In-class participation	Regular contributions	Weekly	5%
Reading discussant	1-2 pages of notes	Once per term	5%
Paper proposal + sources	3-5 pages	October 20	20%
AI interview assignment	5-7 page report	November 3	25%
Research Paper	15-20 pages	December 1	30%
Research Presentation	5-10 ppt slides	Dec 1 – Dec 8	5%

Perusall Comments (10%)

We will be using the Perusall online platform to promote discussion comments about the readings. All readings will be uploaded to Perusall (accessed through Brightspace) and students will be expected to contribute comments or questions on the readings each week. Comments must be posted *before* class each week and will be evaluated based on quality over quantity. Each week, a student's comments will be assigned a grade of either 1 point (good engagement

with the material), .5 points (satisfactory engagement), or 0 points (unsatisfactory/no engagement). 10 points is the maximum grade for the term.

In-Class Participation (5%)

Students will be expected to participate in class discussions each week. The in-class participation grade constitutes the sum of this participation and is based on a wholistic evaluation of students' ability to contribute to class discussion. Students who are losing points based on insufficient participation will be contacted by the instructor and given a chance to adjust their level of participation. [Note: this grade is meant as a low-bar incentive to participate in class. Students who regularly attend and talk at least a little bit in class will get the full 5%]

Reading Discussant (5%)

At the beginning of the term, students will be asked to sign up to be a discussant for one week during the term. Discussants should bring 1-2 pages of notes and discussion questions based on the readings for their designated week and be prepared to lead our discussion of the readings. The sign-up for weekly discussant spots and a tip sheet for preparing notes can be found on Brightspace.

AI Interview Assignment (25%)

To learn more about the practical reality of AI in our society, students will be asked to conduct interviews with a family member or friend about their use of AI. An analysis of this interview in relation to the course material will be the basis of a brief, 5-7 page written report which is due on **November 3**. Instructions for the assignment can be found on Brightspace.

Research Paper Assignments (20%, 30%, 5%)

In this course, students will have the opportunity to write a research paper on a topic related to AI. The process of completing this assignment is broken down into three components. The first is a short research proposal and list of academic sources that are due on **October 20**. The main research paper is due on **December 1**, and students will prepare a presentation based on this research that will be given on one of our two presentation days (**December 1 or December 8**). Instructions for each of these assignments can be found on Brightspace.

LATE PENALTIES AND REQUESTS FOR EXTENSIONS

Late assignments will only be accepted in consultation with the instructor. As soon as you know that you will not be able to turn in an assignment on time, please contact me. All other late assignments will be assessed with a standard late penalty of 5% 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 and complete the relevant forms as required. 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)

AI can be a useful resource for studying and research, but it should never be used to replace thinking, writing, reading or analysis. The best uses of generative AI, and the ones that are acceptable in this course are (1) as a search tool that can help you find resources, (2) as a thinking tool that can help prompt you to consider the various sides of an issue or topic, or (3) as a copy-editing tool to help you identify minor errors or mistakes in your writing.

If you use generative AI for any assignment in this course, you must include an **AI disclosure statement at the beginning of your assignment**. This statement should describe, in detail, how you used AI and why it was necessary to go beyond the accepted uses outlined above. Using generative AI to summarize reading, outline papers, compose text, or substantially revise your existing writing is a great way to rob yourself of a learning opportunity and it will very likely degrade your academic skills.

POLICY ON CLASSROOM RECORDING

Audio or visual recording of content from any aspect of class is strictly prohibited, except with the expressed permission of the instructor.

SCHEDULE

September 15 – Introduction to Law, Society and AI

- Course Outline Review

September 22 – What is Artificial Intelligence?

- Crawford, Kate. 2021. *The Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Pgs. 1-21.
- Haugeland, John. 1989. *Artificial Intelligence the Very Idea*. MIT Press. Pgs. 1-12.
- Smith, Brian Cantwell. 2019. *The Promise of Artificial Intelligence: Reckoning and Judgment*. MIT Press. Pgs. 47-54.
- Amodei, Dario. 2024. "Dario Amodei — Machines of Loving Grace." (<https://darioamodei.com/machines-of-loving-grace>).

September 29 – AI Safety, the Singularity, and Capitalist Innovation

- Thorstad, David. 2024. "Against the Singularity Hypothesis." *Philosophical Studies*. 182: 1627–1651.
- Zittrain, Jonathan. 2019. "From Technical Debt to Intellectual Debt in AI." *Berkman Klein Center Collection*. (<https://medium.com/berkman-klein-center/from-technical-debt-to-intellectual-debt-in-ai-e05ac56a502c>).
- Doctorow, Cory. 2023. "Tiktok's Enshittification." <https://pluralistic.net/2023/01/21/potemkin-ai/>.

October 6 – Frameworks for Regulating AI

- Nelson, Alondra, Sorelle Friedler, and Ami Fields-Meyer. 2022. *Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights*. White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Pgs. 14-52.
- Kratsios, Michael J., David O. Sacks, and Marco A. Rubio. 2025. *Winning the AI Race: America's AI Action Plan*. Washington, D.C.: The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Pgs. 1-23. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Americas-AI-Action-Plan.pdf>.
- Pasquale, Frank. 2020. *New Laws of Robotics*. Harvard University Press. Pgs. 1-32.

October 13 – AI Infrastructure and Environmental Impact

- Crawford, Kate, and Vladan Joler. 2018. *Anatomy of an AI System*. AI Now Institute and Share Lab. <http://www.anatomyof.ai>
- Cellard, Loup, Christine Parker, and Fiona Haines. 2025. "Beyond AI as an Environmental Pharmakon: Principles for Reopening the Problem-Space of Machine Learning's Carbon Footprint." *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 8(3):1020–45. doi:[10.1177/25148486251332087](https://doi.org/10.1177/25148486251332087).
- Bender, Emily M., Timnit Gebru, Angelina McMillan-Major, and Shmargaret Shmitchell. 2021. "On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big? 🦜." Pp. 610–23 in *Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency*. Virtual Event Canada: ACM.

October 20 – AI and Inequality

- Benjamin, Ruha. 2019. *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. John Wiley & Sons. Pgs. 49-76.
- Barabas, Chelsea. 2020. "Beyond Bias: 'Ethical AI' in Criminal Law." in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethics of AI*, edited by M. D. Dubber, F. Pasquale, and S. Das. Oxford University Press. Pgs. 737-753.
- Farrell, Henry, Alison Gopnik, Cosma Shalizi, and James Evans. 2025. "Large AI Models Are Cultural and Social Technologies." *Science* 387(6739):1153–56. doi:[10.1126/science.adt9819](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adt9819).

October 27 – Reading Week**November 3 – Privacy and Surveillance in the Age of AI**

- Hill, Kashmir. 2024. *Your Face Belongs to Us: A Tale of AI, a Secretive Startup, and the End of Privacy*. Random House. Pgs. 202-236
- Solove, Daniel J., and Woodrow Hartzog. 2024. "Kafka in the Age of AI and the Futility of Privacy as Control." *Boston University Law Review*: 104:1021-1042
<https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=4685553>
- Moreno, Felipe Romero. 2024. "Generative AI and Deepfakes: A Human Rights Approach to Tackling Harmful Content." *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology* 38(3):297–326. doi:[10.1080/13600869.2024.2324540](https://doi.org/10.1080/13600869.2024.2324540).

November 10 – AI and the Future of Labor

- Pugh, Allison J. 2024. *The Last Human Job: The Work of Connecting in a Disconnected World*. Princeton University Press. Pgs. 55-95
- Valle, Dominique A. Montiel, and Samantha Shorey. 2024. "Dis//Assemblages of AI: Repair Labor and Resistance in the Automated Workplace." *Information, Communication & Society* 27(10):2022–37.
- Doctorow, Cory. 2026. *The Reverse Centaur's Guide to Life After AI*. MCD Farrar, Straus, & Giroux. Pgs. 106-136.

November 17 – AI Art and Creativity

- Benjamin, Walter. 2015. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." in *Illuminations*. Random House. Pgs. 217-252
- Natale, Simone, and Leah Henrickson. 2022. "The Lovelace Effect: Perceptions of Creativity in Machines." *New Media & Society*. 26(4), 1909-1926.
- Carvalho, Julio. 2025. "The Contingencies of Copyright and Some Big Questions of Our Time." *Journal of Intellectual Property Law & Practice* 20(7):437–46.
doi:[10.1093/jiplp/jpaf024](https://doi.org/10.1093/jiplp/jpaf024).

November 24 – Legal and Moral Issues Raised by Human-AI interaction

- Darling, Kate. 2016. "Extending Legal Protection to Social Robots: The Effects of Anthropomorphism, Empathy, and Violent Behavior towards Robotic Objects." in *Robot Law*, edited by R. Calo, A. M. Froomkin, and I. Kerr. Edward Elgar Publishing. Pgs 213-234.
- Elish, Madeleine Clare. 2019. "Moral Crumple Zones: Cautionary Tales in Human-Robot Interaction." *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society* 5:40–60. doi:
[10.17351/ests2019.260](https://doi.org/10.17351/ests2019.260).

- Adam, David. 2025. "Supportive? Addictive? Abusive? How AI Companions Affect Our Mental Health." *Nature* 641(8062):296–98. doi:[10.1038/d41586-025-01349-9](https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-025-01349-9).

December 1 – The Role of AI in War and Conflict

- Reichert, Ramón. 2025. "Autonomous Occupation: Israel's AI-Driven Drone Warfare and the Digital Architecture of Authoritarian Power." *Dialogues on Digital Society* 1(3):368–72. doi:[10.1177/29768640251381423](https://doi.org/10.1177/29768640251381423).
- Madianou, Mirca. 2021. "Nonhuman Humanitarianism: When 'AI for Good' Can Be Harmful." *Information, Communication & Society* 24(6):850–68. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2021.1909100.
- Kerr, Ian, and Katie Szilagyi. 2018. "Evitable Conflicts, Inevitable Technologies? The Science and Fiction of Robotic Warfare and IHL." *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 14(1):45–82. doi:[10.1177/1743872113509443](https://doi.org/10.1177/1743872113509443).

December 8 – Paper Presentations

- No Readings

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are strictly prohibited from submitting any work that has been previously submitted for academic credit in another course. Any such submission will result in a grade of 0, and the student will be referred to the university's academic integrity office for review. Re-using any portion of previous work, regardless of its extent, will be treated as a violation of academic integrity, unless the student is given permission by the instructor.

Collaboration is permitted in specific instances where the instructor allows it. For example, group projects or collaborative assignments may be part of the course, in which case students are encouraged to work together and divide the tasks evenly. In all other cases (such as individual assignments), students must complete their work independently.

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.

UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES

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, 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.

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; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of 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 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. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course.

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/>

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](#).