

Course Outline

COURSE:	LAWS 4101B – Contemporary Justice Theories
TERM:	Fall 2026
PREREQUISITES:	LAWS 2908 or PAPM 3000 and fourth-year Honours standing.
CLASS:	Day & Mondays Time: 6:05pm to 8:55pm Room: NA – this course is delivered online with scheduled classes each week.
INSTRUCTOR:	Dr. Philip Alexander Steiner
CONTACT:	Office Hrs: by appointment Email: PhilipSteiner@cunet.carleton.ca
BRIGHTSPACE:	

CALENDAR COURSE DESCRIPTION

Selected major contemporary theories of justice such as those associated with Rawls, Walzer, and Habermas, with emphasis on both their procedural and substantive elements and their concrete ramifications for law, policy and political practice.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course explores the broad theme of “justice” through a selected survey of contemporary theory. Drawing from a wide array of moral, legal, social, and political thinkers, the class will examine different takes on **what justice means, what its core principles could or should be, its social conditions of possibility**, as well as the **forces that help shape or break it**. Seminar participants will be expected to read a range of challenging materials, and to engage with those materials each week, both conversationally and through various written assignments.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a fourth-year honours course, this seminar aims to test and further strengthen students' core academic competencies. These include but are not limited to: reading and summarizing complex materials, discussing and presenting ideas verbally in a group setting, managing competing priorities under short timelines, and writing (especially in essay format) at a fourth-year University level. Beyond these core goals, this seminar focuses on three additional learning objectives:

1. **Building a foundational understanding of the field** – while students are not expected to become experts in contemporary justice theories, the course aims to provide each participant with a broad overview of the ideas and thinkers that have shaped the contemporary debates around justice/injustice.
2. **Strengthening Critical Thinking skills** – through written and verbal engagement with the materials, this course aims to clearly distinguish for students the difference between criticism/critique and critical thinking and help provide tools and techniques to strengthen the latter.
3. **Learning to apply theory using a Critical Legal Studies (CLS) Approach** – throughout the course, students will be challenged to use their new (or broadened) understanding of justice, one that focuses on wider interconnections with society, social solidarity, communication, or democratic and legal institutions, to find applications and/or implications to and for real world legal issues.

REQUIRED TEXTS

All texts for this course will be either a) provided through Brightspace, or b) accessible via the Carleton University Library. Students are not required to purchase textbooks or other learning materials for this course.

Students may be invited to screen secondary materials in the form of documentary films or other video resources, which may include nominal costs (\$5-\$15).

READING AND WORKLOAD

This course is a reading intensive course, with an average weekly reading load of **approximately 20 and 40 pages per week** (some weeks less, some weeks more).

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Additionally, the assigned readings will be works of legal, moral, social or political theory, and as such are often denser and more complex than other types of readings. Students will be required to keep up with all readings and be prepared to **actively participate in** and/or **lead weekly seminar discussions**. Given the nature of the materials being covered, students are strongly advised against delay in covering assigned readings – catching up several weeks of readings at the end of the course may not be feasible. That said, **this course does not require a background in contemporary justice theory** or theory more broadly – provided students keep up with the assigned readings.

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. All components must be successfully completed in order to get a passing grade.

Course Component	Percentage of Grade
<u>Attendance and (informed) Participation</u>	10%
<u>Three Reading Reflections (3-4 pages)</u>	30%
<u>In Class Presentation/Discussion Facilitation</u>	20%
<u>Take-Home Examination</u>	40%

Attendance and (informed) Participation 10%

This course is organized in terms of scheduled seminars, which will consist of a combination of student-led presentations, discussion sessions, and micro-lectures. Coming to each session prepared (having read and considered the assigned readings) is both essential to each student's individual success, and to the group experience as a whole. Students will earn up to 1% per lecture attended based on the quality of the informed participation up to a total of 10% of their final grades.

Critical Reading Reflections – (30%)

Over the course of the term, students are expected to write and submit **three (3) critical reading reflections** on the assigned readings. **Each submitted reflection will be worth up to 10% of the student's final grade, to a total of 30%.** These are not meant to be

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summaries of the assigned materials, but instead critical engagements with those readings as well as the week's lecture and discussion. Students may select any three weeks between week 2 and week 11. No reflections will be possible for the first or final sessions. **Critical reading reflections are to be 3-4 pages, double-spaced, using standard margins and 12pts font.** Each reflection is due one week after the seminar it is based on – prior to the start of the next week's seminar.

Given the nature of these opportunities, late submissions will generally not be accepted. Longer-term accommodation, due to chronic health conditions or other external factors will only be considered if they are submitted through the Paule Menton Centre.

In Class Presentation/Discussion Facilitation (20%)

Over the course of the term, students will be assigned a week to present on the assigned readings and themes. More than one student will present on each week's readings, but while these presentations are expected to be coordinated, they are not group projects. Students will be graded individually. Students are expected to focus their presentations on the assigned readings for their given weeks but also bring in additional relevant readings appropriate to the topic. These may include optional readings when available, but do not have to. Additional details and presentation dates will be provided during the introductory session.

Take-Home Exam (40%)

At the end of the term, students will be assigned a final take-home examination. The exams will be provided December 11th and be due December 23rd by 11:59pm. Students will be presented with three questions of which they will select two. Answers will be expected to draw on primary and secondary resources discussed throughout the term, as well as any additional relevant academic sources students wish to draw on. Answers will need to be provided in full essay format, including appropriate citations. The total length of all expected answers will be between 15-20 pages. Additional information will be provided as part of the exam instructions.

As these take-home examinations are considered formal exams, any request for deferral must be submitted through the Registrar's Office. The exams are otherwise subject to the late penalties noted below.

LATE PENALTIES AND REQUESTS FOR EXTENSIONS

Late penalties, where late submissions are accepted, will be set at 5% per day (including

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holidays and weekends). To a maximum of 7 days or 35%.

Scheduled presentations, participation opportunities, and critical reading reflections tied to specific seminars may not be submitted late. The rescheduling of presentations, under exceptional circumstances, will be considered at the discretion of the instructor.

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 USING GENERATIVE OR AGENTIC AI

Students may use Generative AI tools like CoPilot, ChatGPT, or Gemini **but only in specific, limited ways**. AI tools can be used to assist with tasks such as gathering ideas, looking for additional contextual information online, assisting with research (like finding academic articles) or proofreading a final draft for grammar and style. All such uses must be clearly identified in any submitted work, or they will be considered a violation of Carleton's academic integrity provisions.

However, the use of AI to summarize, generate analysis of, or otherwise produce engagements with the course materials is anathema to the objectives of the course and will not be tolerated. Any use of Generative AI to create work that is submitted for assessment is considered a violation of Carleton's academic integrity provisions.

More broadly, letting a simulation of thinking based on algorithmic predictive text and meta-data collage replace genuine consideration robs students of the fundamental benefits of this course, university in general, and their own right to think.

The onus is on students to ensure that any use of AI tools is acceptable, if in doubt, consult with the course director.

Students can also access resources related to citing Generative AI on the [MacOdrum Library website](#).

SCHEDULE

The schedule provided represents the planned weekly seminar topics and assigned readings. However, students are expected to check the course's Brightspace page on an ongoing basis for any potential changes to schedule, topics, or readings.

Additional readings, themes, or instructions may be provided week to week based on the ongoing progress of the seminar or other external factors.

Class Schedule, Assigned Readings & Important Dates	
<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 14, 2026	Seminar #1 – Introduction <i>Required Readings:</i> none <i>Optional Readings:</i> Baehr, Peter. <i>Founders, Classics, Canons: Modern Disputes over the Origins and Appraisal of Sociology's Heritage</i>. Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New Jersey – 2002. (p 5-40)
September 21, 2026	Seminar #2 – “The” Theory of Justice <i>Required reading:</i>

	Rawls, John. <i>A Theory of Justice</i> [revised edition]. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge – 1971 [1999]. (pages 3-19, 118-123) Optional reading: Rawls, John. <i>A Theory of Justice</i> [revised edition]. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge – 1971 [1999].
September 22, 2026	Last day for registration and course changes (including auditing) in full fall, late fall, and fall/winter courses.
September 28, 2026	Seminar #3 - Foundations I: Utilitarianism & the Liberal Theory of Harm Required reading: Bentham Jeremy. “Principles of Morals and Legislation” in Sandel, Micheal J. (editor) <i>Justice: A Reader</i>. Oxford University Press, New York, New York - 2007. (chapter 2: p 9 – 14) Mill, John Stuart. “Utilitarianism” in Sandel, Micheal J. (editor) <i>Justice: A Reader</i>. Oxford University Press, New York, New York - 2007. (chapter 2: p 16-27, 35-47) Optional reading: NA
October 5, 2026	Seminar #4 - Foundations II – Community or Society? Required reading: Tönnies, Ferdinand. (2002) <i>Community and Society</i>. Mineola: Dover Publications Inc.

	<i>Optional reading:</i> In Memoriam Ferdinand Tönnies, (1855-1936) Salomon, Albert Social Research; Jan 1, 1936; 3, 1; Periodicals Archive Online.
October 12, 2026	Statutory Holiday University Closed
October 19, 2026	Seminar #5 - Political Liberalism & Justice as Consensus <i>Required reading:</i> Rawls, John. Political Liberalism [revised edition]. Columbia University Press, New York – 1993 [1996] (pages xv-lxii, 133-168) <i>Optional reading:</i> Rawls, John. Political Liberalism [revised edition]. Columbia University Press, New York – 1993 [1996] (pages 3-46)
October 26-30, 2026	Fall break. No classes.
November 2 2026	Seminar #6 - Communitarianism <i>Required reading:</i> Kymlicka, Will. <i>Multicultural Citizenship</i>. Clarendon Press, Oxford – 1995 (pages 34-48) Walzer, Michael. “Communitarian Critique of

	Liberalism” in Political Theory, Vol. 18(1) 1990 (pages 6-23) Optional reading: Gutman, Amy. “Communitarian Critique of Liberalism” in Avineri, Shlomo & Avner de-Shalit (eds). <i>Communitarianism and Individualism</i>. Oxford University Press, Oxford – 1992. (pages 120-136) Walzer, Michael. <i>Thick and Thin: Moral Argument Home and Abroad</i>. University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame – 1994 (pages 1-39)
November 9, 2026	Seminar #7 - Justice through Deliberation Required reading: Habermas, Jürgen. “Reconciliation Through the Public Use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls’s Political Liberalism” in <i>Journal of Philosophy</i> (92) 2 - 1995. Optional reading: Habermas, Jürgen. <i>Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy</i>. The MIT Press, Cambridge – 1998 (pages 266-299) Rawls, John. “Reply to Habermas” in <i>Political Liberalism</i> (revised edition). Columbia University Press, New York – 1993 [1996]. (pages 421-434)
November 16, 2026	Seminar #8 - Justice Beyond State Lines Required reading

	Young, Iris Marion. <i>Inclusion and Democracy</i>. Oxford University Press, Oxford – 2000. (pages 236-251, 265-275) Optional reading: Forst, Rainer. “Towards a Critical Theory of Transnational Justice” in <i>Metaphilosophy</i>. Vol 32(1/2) – 2001. (pages 160-179) Pogge, Thomas. “The Priorities of Global Justice” in <i>Metaphilosophy</i>. 32(1/2) – 2001. (pages 6-24)
November 23, 2026	Seminar #9 – Empire, Colonialism and “Race” Required reading Fanon, Frantz. <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i>. Translated by Richard Philcox, Sixtieth anniversary edition., Grove Press, 2021 (pages 1-51, 235-239) Olson, Joel. <i>The Abolition of White Democracy</i>. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis – 2004. (pages xi-xxix) Optional reading: Angela Davis’ <i>Freedom is a Constant Struggle</i> – Chapter 8
November 27, 2026	Last day for summative tests or examinations or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade in the fall or fall/winter before the official examination period.
November 30, 2026	Seminar #10 – Capitalism, Environment and Intergenerational Justice

	Required reading: Hannah Arendt (1998) ‘Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility’ in <i>Collective Responsibility</i> (Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield), edited by Larry May & Stacey Hoffman. Lukas Meyer (2015) ‘Intergenerational Justice’, <i>The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> (Fall 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed). This is available at: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justice-intergenerational/ Optional reading: Daniel Butt (2016) “Law, governance and the ecological ethos”, in Stephen Gardiner and Allen Thompson (eds.) <i>The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press) Marx, Karl. “The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” in Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. <i>Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collect Works, Volume 3, Marx and Engels: 1843-1844</i>. International Publishers, New York - 1975. (p. 293-306)
December 7, 2026	Seminar #11 – Justice, Difference and Consensus as the Problem Required reading: Connolly, William. “Suffering, Justice and the Politics of Becoming” in Campbell, David and Michael J. Shapiro (eds) <i>Moral Spaces: Rethinking</i>

	<i>Ethics and World Politics</i>. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis – 1999. (pages 125-153) Optional reading: Gould, Carol C. “Diversity and Democracy: Representing Differences” in Benhabib, Seyla (ed) <i>Democracy and Difference: Contesting The Boundaries of the Political</i>. Princeton University Press, Princeton – 1996 (pages 171-186)
December 11, 2026 (Weird Friday the University is making us pretend is a Monday)	Seminar #12 – Agonal Democracy, Radical Reversals, and Dénouement Required reading: Mouffe, Chantal. <i>The Return of the Political</i>. Verso, London – 1993. (pages 9-21, 41-59) Optional reading: Mouffe, Chantal. <i>On the Political</i>. Routledge, London – 2005. (pages 35-63)
December 11, 2026	Last day of fall term classes Classes follow a <u>Monday</u> schedule Last day for take home examinations to be assigned
December 6-7, 2026	No classes or examinations take place
December 8-20, 2026	Final examinations in fall term courses and mid-term examinations in fall/winter courses will be held
December 23, 2026	Final take-home examinations are due.
December 24, 2026 – January 1, 2027	University closed.

STATEMENTS ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In addition to following Carleton's [Academic Integrity Policy](#), students in this class are not permitted to submit any work that is substantially the same piece of work submitted in another course.

Similarly, all work is expected to be completed independently. While presentations will include a degree of group coordination, all actual work, written or presented orally, must be the sole work of the student submitting that work.

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, 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
- 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.

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

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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](#).