

Course Outline

COURSE:	LAWS 1001C – Introduction to Legal Studies I
TERM:	FALL 2026
PREREQUISITES:	None
CLASS:	Day & Time: Please check Carleton Central for current Class Schedule. Room: Note this is an “in person” section of the course so you must attend the class to have access to the lecture materials (i.e. the lectures are not recorded or posted online). There are also required in-person tutorials .
INSTRUCTOR:	Stephen J. Tasson
CONTACT:	Office: Room D588 Loeb Building Office Hrs: Thurs 1-3pm (in my office) or by appointment Telephone: None Email: steve.tasson@carleton.ca

CALENDAR COURSE DESCRIPTION

Introduction to legal studies: concepts, sources, nature and functions of law; historical, cultural and constitutional foundations of Canadian legal system; common and civil law traditions; statutory interpretation; precedent; legal institutions; frameworks for analyzing formal and informal conceptions of law and its role in society.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

At first glance the answers to questions like “what is law?” and “what does law do?” may seem relatively easy or even unremarkable. However, a crucial first step in a deeper understanding of the complexities of contemporary law is to recognize that beyond simply resolving interpersonal disputes or defining crimes, legal categories and activities also help us make sense of ourselves, our relationships, and the world in which we live. Law constitutes, authorizes and structures significant parts of our collective and individual life experience and identities. Constituting the “legal foundations” of a community, for example, is an important way that groups reflect and practically define themselves and publicly declare the roles and responsibilities expected from members. Law, in this way, is a means to define what it means to belong as a citizen and the rights and responsibilities that are associated with that citizenship.

While **inclusion** in these “legal” identities and institutions may **empower** individuals and provide a strong sense of security and belonging, the opposite can also be true. Legal definitions and legal processes also delegitimize, marginalize, and **disempower** some groups, practices and ways of knowing the world. Making and remaking “the law” is consequently never “neutral” and our experience of “the law” is far from “universal”. To really understand law, then, we must ask how legal definitions and foundational claims are created and maintained? Which identities and practices are left out or purposefully excluded? How does law potentially aggravate – rather than alleviate – **social inequalities** and exclusions (based on class, race, gender, religion, sexuality, etc)?

These are critical questions. Questions that might challenge some of our preconceptions about law and its value. They are fundamentally questions about what law is and does; but also crucially what it *ought* to be and do.

To begin to answer these challenging questions we must first reflect on how we understand and define “law,” “the legal,” and by extension “legal studies”; we must understand the historical and constitutional “foundations” of our legal institutions (in Canada) and also the seemingly more mundane processes of legal “fact-finding” and decision-making that order and stabilize these (imagined) foundations. What principles and structures support “the law” in Canada today? How are these established? Who decides, and on what authority are such decisions made? Is violence a necessary part of law? What can the power and operation of “law” in Canada tell us about the production and reproduction of “Canadian society”, more generally?

Course Objectives (or, ‘what I want you to get out of the course’)

1. Identify and contrast historical “perspectives” or “theories of law”. Be able to discuss the implications of adopting one or more of these perspectives to understand law’s roles and impacts in contemporary societies.
2. Develop an understanding of the sources of Canadian law and the historical links to, and treatment of, “other(ed)” systems of law and social ordering. This includes understanding the early and ongoing influences of Indigenous, Civil and Common Law legal traditions in Canada.
3. Understand the stabilizing role and practices of “precedent” in judicial interpretation and decision-making within the Common Law tradition. Connect this to the theme of foundations.
4. Be capable of reading and identifying key aspects and authorities within legal decisions (i.e. read legal cases)
5. Develop your ability to summarize and critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of competing written arguments in legal studies articles and texts.
6. Examine and appreciate the relationship between political liberalism, “liberal rights” and contemporary theories of citizenship, social inclusion, and state violence.
7. Improve your ability to effectively structure, and persuasively communicate, ideas and arguments in formal writing (e.g. essays).
8. Develop your capacity to reflexively locate yourself and your own structural position within some of the core debates we investigate in the course.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Tasson, S. *et al.* (eds.) (2026). *Introduction to Legal Studies: Foundations and Rights Protection* (2nd ed.). North York: Captus Press.

This core “course text” (as it is referenced on the weekly reading schedule) is available for purchase at the **Carleton Bookstore**.

The text is also available directly from the publisher, **Captus Press**, as an *ebook*. See the following link for more information on accessing the text online (<http://www.captus.com/information/ebook.htm>). Follow the link to ‘**Carleton University**’ section. The cost is roughly \$75 (depending on the format you choose).

This is a **new edition** so you won’t be able to purchase used copies currently. Be sure to **purchase the correct edition** as earlier editions will not include all the required readings. **There are no other books or required materials to purchase for THIS section of the course!**

NOTE: In addition to this main course text there will be **additional readings/media** for which you will also be responsible. These are available to you through our course Brightspace page and detailed in the **Required Reading Schedule (on Brightspace)**.

EVALUATION

(All core components must normally be completed in order to receive a passing grade in this course)

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.

Course Participation (Tutorials)	15%	(continuous, see below)
Midterm Exam	20%	(W6 – date and time TBA)
Reading a Case Quiz (in class/TA group)	10%	(W8 or W9)
Term Paper	25%	(December 6 - see Brightspace)
Final Exam	30%	(December 12-23, exam period)

COURSE COMPONENTS

Course Participation (15%) (Note: TA Groups are not every week – see COURSE SCHEDULE)

Despite the fact that this is primarily delivered as a lecture course, individual weekly participation and “engagement” are still key components of the course and your mark. Hopefully we can have some solid discussion in the lecture, but your main opportunity to discuss and participate is in the “tutorials”/discussion groups (you will have registered in one of these groups when you registered for the course). You are expected to **attend and come prepared to participate and contribute to your group**. Your “course participation” mark is based not only on your basic attendance to these groups, but on the quality of your actual participation in the discussions and planned exercises.

It is very important that you attend these groups! While a key function is to provide a more intimate place to discuss course material with your peers, the groups also help clarify assignment expectations and develop some of the core skills necessary to your success in this course (and beyond).

Reading a Case (In-class Quiz) (10%)

Active and critical reading are key skills that you should develop/hone as the term progresses. Building reading skills is vital to succeed in future legal studies courses and at university, more generally. In this course we will focus on how to read academic articles and how to read legal cases. To evaluate your ability to understand the basics of **reading a legal case** there will be a short quiz conducted “in class” (during the tutorial time) **Week 8 or 9**. The precise date of the quiz will be announced early in the term and more details and tips to prepare will be provided as they are available.

Term Paper (25%)

The “Term Paper” assignment is comprised of several sub-components: these include a preliminary “thesis submission”, summary and analytical components, as well as a reflection. The inclusion of a term paper in the course evaluation provides you with an opportunity to engage the course materials that we investigate in more depth and to draw connections to themes highlighted in the lectures. The specific questions, format requirements, and rubric(s) for evaluation will be outlined in the assignment sheet **(available during the Fall Reading Week on Brightspace)** and will also be discussed in a lot more detail in the tutorial groups.

*****NOTE:** “Outside” research or non-course sources (other than course texts and lectures) will **NOT** normally be required and are usually **NOT** encouraged in preparing the Term Paper. The paper is purposefully **NOT** a “research paper” but rather structured to test your competencies in developing careful and engaging responses to challenging questions.

Midterm Exam (20%)

The midterm exam will be scheduled by Exam Services to occur in W6 (October 12-18). **It will evaluate your understanding of the materials that we have covered in class up to that point** (W1-W6) The exact date, time and location are centrally scheduled by the university so the date and times are TBA. The exam is likely to consist primarily of multiple-choice and “short essay” questions. Format details will be discussed in some detail in the lecture and tutorials. For the most part multiple-choice exams aim to test the breadth of knowledge you have gained in the course rather than the depth (this is what the essays parts are for!).

Final Exam (30%)

The final exam will be held during the formally scheduled exam period in December. **It will cover content for the whole term but will primarily focus on materials covered in W6-W12.** The exact date, time and location are centrally scheduled by the university. The final exam is likely to consist primarily of multiple-choice questions; though there may be a couple of short-answer questions as well (if this is the case, I will inform you when the midterm results are released). The specifics of the final exam and tips for studying will be discussed closer to the end of term.

SCHEDULE

The complete **Required WEEKLY Reading and Lecture Topics schedule** is available on Brightspace (our online portal). If you have any questions or concerns about these topics or readings, please let me know via email. Please also note these other important term dates:

Fall 2026 Sessional Dates and University Closures	
Please find a full list of important academic dates on the calendar website: https://calendar.carleton.ca/academicyear/	
September 9, 2026	Fall term begins.
September 22, 2026	Last day for registration and course changes (including auditing) in fall and fall/winter courses.
September 30, 2026	Last day to withdraw from full fall and 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 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
December 11, 2026	Fall term ends.
	Last day of Fall classes.
	Classes follow a Monday schedule.
December 9-10, 2026	No classes or examinations take place
December 12-23, 2026	Final examinations in fall courses and mid-term examinations in fall/winter courses will be held. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

The Department of Law and Legal Studies operates in association with certain policies and procedures. Please review these documents to ensure that your practices meet our Department's expectations:

<https://carleton.ca/law/current-students/>

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 (see the Citation Style below).

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 **very serious offence** that cannot be resolved directly by the course 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. Academic Integrity offenses can lead to penalties that are very serious, including a final grade of "F" for the course to academic probation etc. **Recklessly or purposefully engaging in it is incredibly misguided.**

If you are struggling or unsure about how best to use sources in preparing your work in the course, it is far better to contact me and talk to me about resources to help!

CLASSROOM RECORDING

Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is ***prohibited***. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact the Instructor and the [Paul Menton Centre](#). Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also strictly prohibited. Under the University's [Copyright Policy](#), faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as lectures slides, lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials or otherwise circulate these materials without the instructor's written permission.

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

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).

Pregnancy and Family-Status Related Obligation

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, [click here](#).

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 (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 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/>

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>

OTHER COURSE SPECIFIC POLICIES

(Please ask if there is any confusion or concern with any course-related policies!)

ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING and SUBMISSION

All written work is submitted through the Brightspace portal unless otherwise directed! **Email is NOT considered an acceptable means of submission.**

All written work submitted for this course must be double-spaced, formatted in 12pt Times New Roman or Arial font with standard margins. Assignments normally must include your name and student number and the course code in the document's header. Title pages, bibliographies and extensive footnotes are not usually counted in determining an assignment's word count or page length (when these are stipulated).

I also note that submitting **substantially the same piece of work** more than once for academic credit is prohibited (i.e. you may NOT normally re-use your own work from a different course/assignment unless you seek and receive written permission in advance).

LATE ASSIGNMENTS & EXTENSIONS POLICY

Why are deadlines so important?

Meeting deadlines particularly matters in larger courses like this one where I rely on TAs to mark course work. Teaching Assistants are students like you! They have their own assignments and course/research work to complete – and have their own deadlines (and in a few cases, actual lives to live!). They plan their term schedule around when they have to grade and complete feedback for their students and if your assignments or papers are late this puts additional pressure on them and complicates my ability to maintain consistency in grades across the course.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS will normally be penalized 3% per day when work remains unsubmitted (e.g. a paper marked 68% that was 1 day late would receive a final grade of 65%) (unless otherwise specified on the assignment instructions).

Late assignments must be submitted normally through Brightspace unless you are directed otherwise.

*****Extension/ “Academic Consideration” 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 an extension/consideration is warranted.

Extension/consideration requests must normally be communicated to me a) **in advance of the assignment deadline OR no later than 24hrs after the deadline has passed**. 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 **fewer than 5 days**, please complete the form at the following link **PRIOR** to the assignment due date (be sure to read this form carefully) <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-consideration-coursework-form/>

For more information regarding academic consideration for short-term (again fewer than 5 days) 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 5 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!**

If you believe my decisions regarding your application for consideration have been unreasonable, you may appeal to the Chair of Law and Legal Studies **within three (3) working days** of my decision. The appeal form is 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 academic consideration can be found [here](#).

*****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.

GENERATIVE “AI” and “CITATION STYLE”

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). 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.

The key to “good” citation is **transparency, clarity, and consistency**. Your citations/references should allow your reader to clearly identify the sources you are using and allow them to easily trace these sources, if required.

[Carleton’s library offers a number of resources on referencing and citation](#). In this class I prefer that you use an

***Documenting “Generative AI” use* (NOTE!)**

As “AI” tools become more ubiquitous, students may wish to use these tools in the preparation of marked course work. In this course students may use such tools, but only in **specific, limited ways**.

Such tools can be used to assist with tasks such as proofreading a final draft for grammar and style.

However, students are **not permitted** to use AI to generate, organize or communicate core ideas or personal reflections (obviously). The learning goals and focus of the course are on developing original thought and critical thinking skills, so “AI tools” should not be relied upon for creating the main content of any assignment.

Any use of AI must be clearly documented and cited, including the prompts used and how the tool assisted in the process. This **“Statement re AI use” must be added before your bibliography**. (If you don’t use these tools to prepare your assignment then you must still declare this). The library has compiled resources related to citing generative AI (see [MacOdrum Library guide](#)).

Any assignment without this basic statement will NOT be graded.

“in-text” citation style (either [APA](#) or [MLA](#)– see the [links for the basics](#)) though, the department does allow you to also use [McGill](#) (so this will be accepted). PLEASE INCLUDE PAGE NUMBERS IN YOUR CITATIONS.

As highlighted above, failure to reference properly, using “generative AI” without attribution, or attempting to pass someone else’s ideas or work off as your own constitutes plagiarism and may violate the University’s Academic Integrity Policy.

****ASSIGNMENT COPIES & 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. You are expected to keep copies of this material until the final course grades are released.

INFORMAL GRADE APPEALS & ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK REQUESTS

There may be instances where you feel an error has been made in assigning a grade to your submitted work in the course or where the reasons for the assigned grade are unclear or confusing. In such instances you may seek further feedback and/or **informally “appeal” the grade**.

Such requests **must first be directed toward the person who initially graded the work** (in most cases this will be a TA). In cases of appeal, you must establish “grounds” for the appeal (i.e. clearly indicate where you think a mistake was made). Vague allusions to “working hard” on an assignment or what you “normally get in other classes” are not sufficient grounds for an appeal.

If after discussing with your TA, the reasons for your grade remain unclear or you would like **additional feedback** on the submission, then you may contact/ appeal the mark to me (Steve). Normally I ask students to “stop by”/log on during office hours or create an appt. where we can discuss the work/grade.

If the reasons for the grade remain unclear after this meeting, you may formally appeal your grades as part of a formal **Appeal of Final Grade** (this process is elaborated in the Academic Calendar).

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS IN THIS (& OTHER!) COURSES

1. SHOW UP!

You can’t participate and contribute if you are not attending class and the tutorial groups and this is an

important part of your mark. Basic attendance keeps you engaged and prevents you from falling too far behind or feeling overwhelmed. Investing time into your course is the critical first step to better grades!

2. GET IT IN!

Perfection is the enemy of the good! Don't let work linger and get it in on time so you can get feedback on how to improve. I know "letting go" of work is HARD for many folks (it is for me too), but it is a valuable lesson in first year that the term is always shorter than you think! Every class is different but work always seems to come due at the same time and you may be quickly overwhelmed. Plan ahead and work when you *can* rather than when you *must*!

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

Your TA and I are here to help you succeed in the course. While it may feel sometimes that you are "on your own", **you are not!** Again, your TA and I want you to succeed and so you should contact us if you are struggling. **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, 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.
