

Carleton University

Department of Law and Legal Studies

Course Outline

COURSE:**LAWS 4904 (Fall) Special Topic: Take
a Hike: Advanced Research on
Law and Regulation in Parks in
Ottawa/Gatineau****TERM:****Fall 2026-2027****PREREQUISITES:**Prerequisite(s): [LAWS 2908](#), and
fourth-year Honours**CLASS:****Day & Time:** **Thursdays 11:35 pm – 14:25 pm**
***(Please refer to the public schedule
on Carleton Central)***
This is an in-person class; attendance
in class is required.**Room:** **check Carleton Central****INSTRUCTOR:****Doris Buss****CONTACT:****Office:** **Loeb D589****Office Hrs:** **Thursdays 3:30-4:30 pm**
OR by appointment**Telephone:** **613-520-2600 x. 8011****Email:** Doris.buss@carleton.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Law is made not only in courts and by judicial actors. Law and ideas about legality are made and remade by people in their relationships with others, in their working lives, and in the ways they inhabit and move through the geographies of daily life. If law is not found just 'in the books' (laws passed by legislators, decisions made by judges, e.g.), and is found in our daily lives, how do we research and study this more expansive understanding of law? We take up this question in this course, providing hands on experience with research methods for studying law and legality using interviews and participation observation.

The focus of this course is on parks in the Ottawa/Gatineau area, and specifically the rules and techniques for governing the use (including but not limited to hiking, biking, walking) of the Gatineau Park and National Capital Commission greenspaces. Students will examine how the Gatineau Park, and its users, have tried to navigate a tension (or maybe a clash?) between goals of conservation, inclusion and recreation. Through this study, we will explore scholarship on legal geography and law in everyday life, the histories and tensions in regulating parks in Canada, and the statutory bodies tasked with regulation. This is a hands-on course, and together we will consider these issues while engaged in conducting original research through the course activities, which requires learning about different research techniques and the ethical conduct of research.

Objectives: By the end of the course, students will be better able to:

- a. Demonstrate a facility with the research techniques of participation observation and interviewing key informants by practicing these in and outside the classroom;
- b. Identify key insights about the study of law in everyday life and its implications for research methods selection;
- c. Demonstrate through an online tutorial and short written assignment knowledge and preliminary understanding of ethical issues in conducting research with human participants;
- d. Explore some aspects of the inter-relationship between park management goals of conservation and inclusion through reading and reflecting on academic studies;
- e. Be able to propose in writing a research activity on park regulation in Canada demonstrating an appreciation of some of the tensions between ecological management, recreation, and racialized histories of access to parks;
- f. Demonstrate engaged participation in an academic course by staying up to date on readings, attending class regularly, following class discussion (which might include participation, but could also be demonstrated through other means such as incorporating class discussion into written assignments), active participation in all group activities (including classroom small-group work).

Required Text: Course materials are available on ARES and on web addresses provided (but the readings are also easily found through Carleton Library's online catalogue).

Evaluation: 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 Department and the Dean.

ASSESSMENTS (further information is provided in a separate **assignment instruction document**, uploaded to Brightspace).

1. Biography of yourself:	Due 11:25 pm, September 21	2%
2. Research Notebook:	Various (over the whole semester)	20%
3. Research Ethics assignment:	Sept 30	20%
4. Field Research Notes from Oct 22	Nov 2, 4:00pm	12%
5. Interview Assignment Proposal	13 Nov	14%
6. Team short presentation, self-reflection, transcripts	3 or 10 Dec	14%
7. Final Paper	13 December midnight	18%
TOTAL:		100

Other assessment related instructions, including requests for extensions (in addition to those found on Brightspace):

- Assignments handed in more than 45 minutes past the due date will be marked late. Late assignments will be deducted 2 grades/day. Assignments more than three days late will be graded "0". Extensions will only be granted in extreme cases and with appropriate documentation. All late assignments will be put on the bottom of the marking pile. I cannot guarantee that late assignments will be marked prior to the end of term.
- 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/>.

- Students requiring more than two of these extensions will be required to meet with me prior to any further extensions.
- **Extensions for longer than 7 days will normally not be granted (see further information on accommodations below).**
- **Students are required to complete all assignments to pass this course.**

F. COMMUNICATING

I have regular office hours including immediately after our class (in person), or by zoom. You can also make an appointment to see me at an agreed time. I also respond to emails within a few days. **BUT PLEASE NOTE:** I **do not look at email** on the weekends or in the evenings.

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.

Plagiarism, collaboration, academic good practice, generative AI

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.

Collaboration: Reading groups, discussion groups, supportive help and guidance among students is to be encouraged. Good scholarship, while often individually authored, is usually the result of ongoing conversations, suggestions and encouragement.

However, it is essential that ALL YOUR work is generated by you , in your own words, and is original for each course, unless otherwise stipulated in the assignment instructions. Assignments, in whole or in part, cannot be submitted to one or more assignment requirement or course. Re-using any portion of previous work, regardless of its extent, will be treated as a violation of academic integrity.

Academic good practice means citing appropriately, and using quotation marks where needed. Passing off work as your own that relies on the words, phrases, or ideas of others, including by generative AI, is NEVER PERMITTED.

Use of Generative AI

- permissible: brainstorming; creating draft outlines (ie helping you organize your thoughts). **Any such use needs to be documented: what technology did you use, what questions did you ask to generate your brainstorming or outline; how did you adapt these for your purposes.** This explanation will not negatively impact your mark. Its just

good practice (and good for you to create a record of which prompts worked well for you, and which did not).

- Unacceptable use: writing and/or compiling an assignment. Student might be tempted to generate and rely upon readings summaries produced through some generative AI (whether Chat GPT or otherwise). You cannot REPRODUCE these summaries in any form. Doing so, in any way, is a form of plagiarism that will not be tolerated.

But, more importantly, use of generative AI for summarizing readings is strongly discouraged. Why?

- a. The most utilitarian reason: generative AI is still not able to do this well and at a level of depth and comprehension appropriate to an MA. The summaries it will generate for you will be superficial and may even be inaccurate.
- b. Assessments in this class require you to read more deeply than an AI-generated summary. The ‘short cut’ of an AI summary will end up costing you in marks, but also means you will not develop the skills you need for this course and for your future.

My colleague Philip Kaisary puts it this way:

“The course readings are supposed to be challenging: the process of reading and rereading them to make sense of them can be a struggle, but this process of struggle is fundamental to developing a mastery of the course materials. Or, to put in another way, you can hire someone to lift weights for you, but that defeats the point. The value lies in the struggle itself.”

- c. Need more reasons? See this [study](#) comparing groups of students using generative AI (referred to as large language models in this study, or LLMs) to write an essay. The findings: students who use only their brains (the “brain only” group) had “stronger memory and greater semantic accuracy”. The LLM group showed “weaker memory, reduced self-monitoring, and fragmented authorship” (p 138). That is, the ease of LLMs will impact your cognitive abilities. Do you want that?
- d. Environmental and security concerns: Data centers needed for generative AI consume enormous amounts of electricity and water. They are expected to exponentially increase their draws of both electricity and water, becoming a key driver of climate change and water loss. See [here](#) and [here](#). Oh, and there are other related issues about national and individual security (Canadian national ownership of digital infrastructure is woeful. We are under the thumb of the tech bros and why add to that?)

- e. And, if you are not already convinced: generative AI gets better, stronger and more profitable for the owners (a small group of uber wealthy guys in the US mostly) when YOU use it. That is, each time you use generative AI you are helping to make the tech better, and the tech bros wealthier. Why would you freely, with your own labour and for no payment, make already rich people, richer?

No recordings of class discussion are permissible – ever.

PLEASE SEE end of course schedule for more information on: University and Departmental Policies on academic accommodations.

SCHEDULE AND Topics

WEEK	TOPIC
WK 1. Sept 10	Introduction: What is wilderness, What is the study of legality - Patricia Ewick and Susan Sibley. 1998. <i>The common place of law: Stories from everyday life</i> Chapters 1 (pp 3 - 14) - William Cronon. 1995. "The Trouble with Wilderness, or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature", 1-15 (From William Cronon, ed. <i>Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature</i>. Norton Press, NY) Available at: https://www.williamcronon.net/writing/Trouble_with_Wilderness_Main.html
WK 2. Sept 17	Studying Legality: Socio-legal dimensions of law and everyday life - Patricia Ewick and Susan Sibley. 1998. <i>The common place of law: Stories from everyday life</i> Chapter 2 (pp 15 -26) - Kevin Walby and Chris Hurl. 2014. "Policing urban natures: Conservation officer work in Ottawa and Toronto, Canada", <i>International Journal of Urban and Regional Research</i> 38(4): 1476-1490. Not required but of interest: - Blomley N (2016) The territory of property. <i>Prog Hum Geogr</i> 40(5):593–609 - Jeremy Waldron. 1991. "Homelessness and the Issue of Freedom" , open access, https://doaj.org/article/8d6b41624a984439b17c1207c454ebd6
WK 3 Sept 24	Research Ethics and Introducing Ethnographic Research

	- Macquarie University (Sydney Australia) Research Ethics Training for Social Scientists, https://ethicstraining.mq.edu.au * You will need to register to do this required online training. Do the first 50 'pages', which are short, and include four case studies on ethical issues in social science research. - Amanda Coffey. 2018. <i>Doing Ethnography</i>. Introduction: The Foundations of Ethnography: - Introduction: pp 1 to top of p 5; top of p 6-end of p.7; - Chapter 4, In the Field: Observation, Conservation, and Documentation. Pp 43- end of 54.
Wk 4 Oct 1	National Parks and the Gatineau Park - Michael Lait. 2021. <i>The Governance of Near-Urban Conservation Areas: Lessons from Conflicts Surrounding Gatineau Park, near Ottawa, Canada</i>. Chapter 2, National Park at the Doorstep of Canada's Capital, pp. 11-28; - Michael Lait. 2021. <i>The Governance of Near-Urban Conservation Areas: Lessons from Conflicts Surrounding Gatineau Park, near Ottawa, Canada</i>. Chapter 8: An Activist Chair Governs, pp. 137 – 144; 151-155; 159-160 (ended top of the page at the start of 8.4 Successful Federal-Provincial Negotiations) <i>Note: The excerpts in this chapter chart one period in the Park's history where the NCC was working through changing ideas about the Park as a place of conservation versus recreation. Two longstanding issues – private property ownership, and trail usage (by snowmobiles in this case) – become 'hosts' to this debate with property owners arguing that private property is better suited to conservation than public access; and snowmobile enthusiasts successfully contesting a ban issued in the name of conservation. I have tried to shorten the amount of required reading – but this might make the discussion harder to follow. The synthesis I started with in this paragraph is intended to give you some guidance on what to look for in your reading.</i> - Gatineau Park Master plan 2021 (as amended 2024), up to p 33, (access at: https://ncc-ccn.gc.ca/our-plans/gatineau-park-master-plan)

	Recommended but not required: • Banks ND (1986) Constitutional problems related to the creation and administration of Canada's national parks. In: Saunders JO (ed) Managing natural resources in a federal state.
WK 5 Oct 8	Visit to the Gatineau Park Office and Meeting with Park Officials (off-campus class)
WK 6 Oct 15	Illegality and illegitimacy in natural resource governance • Annette Hubschle. 2025. "Contested Illegality: Understanding legitimacy challenges in wildlife governance", in R.C. Brears, J. Lindley (eds). <i>The Palgrave Handbook of Environmental Policy and Law</i>. Pp. 1- • Binnema, Theodore (Ted) and Niemi, Melanie. 2006. "'Let the line be drawn now': Wilderness, conservation and the exclusion of aboriginal people from Banff National Park in Canada" <i>Environmental history</i> 11: 724-750; For discussion in class: • https://www.instagram.com/ruinsandcliffs?igsh=ZWF5YmhrcXA1Y3Mx
Week 7 Oct 22	Field Research visit (Gatineau Park/NCC Greenspace – TBD) • off-campus class. We will go to the Park or to Ottawa area NCC Greenspaces to conduct participation observation and interviews with trail users. Your field notes from this week will form the assignment due Nov 2, 4:00 pm
NO CLASS	Reading Week
Week 8 Nov 5	Does Conservation reduce access? • John H. Knox. 2025 "Dismantling the Fortress: Reforming International Conservation", <i>Harvard Environmental Law Review</i> 49(1), read pp. 7 – 27;
Week 9 Nov 12	Who has access?

	• Jason Byrne. 2012. 'When Green is White: The cultural politics of race, nature, and social exclusion in a Los Angeles urban national park', <i>Geoforum</i> 43: 595-611; if you are pressed for time, focus your reading on pp. 595-599; 604-608; • Peter Donnelly. 1986. "The paradox of parks: politics of recreational land use before and after the mass trespasses" <i>Leisure Studies</i> 5:2, 211-231 Recommended: • Julie Tomiak. "Unsettling Ottawa: Settler Colonialism, indigenous resistance, and the politics of scale", <i>Canadian Journal of Urban Research</i>, Volume 25, Issue 1, pages 8-21.
WK 10 Nov 19	Transgression or Non-Compliance? • David Lambert. 2007. "Rituals of transgression in public parks in Britain, 1846 to the Present," pp. 195- Michael Conan. 2007. <i>Performance and Appropriation: Profane Rituals in Gardens and Landscapes</i>. Dumbarton Oaks
WK 11 Nov 26	Key Informant Interview preparation/Guest Speaker (TBC)
WK 12 Dec 3	Student Presentations
WK 13 Dec 10	Student presentations

University and Departmental Policies:**University Grading system****Grade Point Equivalence Percentage Conversion**

A+	12	90-100
A	11	85-89
A-	10	80-84
B+	9	77-79
B	8	73-76
B-	7	70-72
C+	6	67-69
C	5	63-66
C-	4	60-62
D+	3	57-59
D	2	53-56
D-	1	50-52
F	0	less than 50

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 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](#).