

Law and Society
LGLS360 - A
Spring 2011

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Course description.

The purpose of this course is to study the field of law and society. We will examine the nature of law and what we can and cannot expect it to do for us; how the legal system works, the impact of law on society and of society on law, and the role of cultural and structural determinants in shaping law.

A particular emphasis is placed on empirical studies and on how evidence is used by legal scholars in the debate on the relationship between law and society. The course draws from a variety of perspectives including sociology, political science, history, and philosophy.

A major goal of the course is to offer a practical foundation in the critical assessment of law and legal thinking as well as improving their ability to make arguments in writing and orally. The substantive materials are presented in a manner that encourages critical legal analysis.

Course Objectives

Course goals, both in breadth and detail are as follows:

- 1: To define and describe key legal concepts, specific facts and critical issues in law and correctly apply this information to particular examples; and
- 2: To use conceptual legal models and theories to analyze legal events and case decisions; and
- 3: To apply law and legal theories to make convincing arguments supported by evidence and reasoning.

In particular, through their readings, discussions and class work, students will demonstrate an understanding of and ability to

- a) utilize appropriate legal terminology in the analysis of the law's impact upon current societal problems; (Goal 1)
- b) identify key concepts and assumptions of competing conceptual models and theories in sociolegal studies; (Goal 2)
- c) review and evaluate academic theories posed by social science scholars to contemporary legal/societal problems; (Goals 2, 3)
- d) appropriately use social science and legal resources in written analyses of societal issues; (Goals 2, 3)
- e) identify the relevant assumptions, evidence, methodology, and reasoning in analyzing social issues; (Goal 3)
- f) explain how assigned readings may reflect the historical context of the times, the cultures in which they were developed, or the personal ideology of the author distinguish between statutory

and case law; domestic and international law; and federal and state legal systems; (Goal 3)
g) ability to analyze a specific public policy issue (Goal 4).

Meeting Times

Hours: 3:30 pm - 4:45pm

Day: Tuesday, Thursday

Room: 347

Course Materials

- Stewart Macaulay, Lawrence M. Friedman, Elizabeth Mertz, Law in Action: A Socio-Legal Reader, Foundation Press 2007
- Lawrence M. Friedman, Law in America. A Short History, The Modern Library 2004
- Maps of concepts (online)
- Additional supplemental materials are (and will be made) available on-line

Assigned reading

I keep track of assigned readings on Blackboard under “Assigned Readings”

Time Expectation

This is a three-hour course. The expectation is 9 hours of preparation outside class each week. The course is structured to require 9 hours of readings and project work per week

Attendance Policies

Class preparedness and participation are essential to success in this course. While there is no penalty for failure to attend a particular class, participation credits are occasionally given to students who are in class. Participation credits, along with homework, count towards “Homework and class participation” (see “Grading Policies”). Laptop use is permitted only for note-taking purposes. According to the Bryant University Student Handbook, students must contact the Academic Records Office in the event of situations requiring prolonged absences. In addition, please provide independent notice to me in advance of the absence.

Tests and Final Exam

There will be 4 tests and a final. The 4 tests are short (15 questions: true/false, multiple choice, and short essays), closed book/open notes, and non cumulative. They will be administered at the beginning of class and, after the test, class will resume ordinarily. The final is also closed book/open notes but cumulative. The test schedule appears in the “Semester schedule” tab. Test questions do not address issues that have not been covered in class. Beware that occasionally the lecture touches upon issues that are not in the book: these issues may be included in the tests. "Notes" should be read as notes taken by the student. Collaboration on taking notes is acceptable as well as copying in writing or typing parts of the book in the notes. Photocopies of the book are not acceptable "notes." Typed notes should be printed out: on screen reading is not acceptable.

Makeup Exam Policy

Students with a legitimate excuse are allowed to take a makeup exam. If you anticipate missing a test, you must contact me prior to the scheduled test, either in person, by phone, or by e-mail. Failure to do so will result in an automatic grade of zero for that exam.

Grading Policies

The final grade will be based upon written work and class participation as follows:

1. Tests: 15% each (x4)

2. Final: 30%

3. Homework and class participation: 10%. Several online assignments will be given throughout the semester. They are all pass/fail. Late homework is not accepted (I make exceptions for the first assignment). Furthermore, participation credits are occasionally given to students who are in class. Students who do not turn in online the assignment by the due date or are not in class at the time the participation is taken, receive no credit.

NOTE: On the last week of classes, I will ask the class if there is consensus to modify the syllabus by (1) eliminating the final test and (2) changing the grading policy so that test and class participation scores cumulated by then will be used as the only basis to determine the final grade (using this formula: each test 14% + hw/attendance 16% = 100%). I will only implement this change if ALL students consent to it.

Letter grades are assigned as follows:

93-100%: A

90-92%: A-

87-89%: B+

83-86%: B

80-82%: B-

77-79%: C+

73-76%: C

70-72%: C-

67-69%: D+

60-66%: D

59% or below: F

Tests

Test 1: February 17

Test 2: March 17

Test 3: April 7

Test 4: April 28

Final: May 16, at 10am



Lectures

Semester Schedule



Week	Topic	Readings
1 -2	The Origins and Context of American Law Defining 'Law' Law's roots Legal autonomy	Friedman: 3-19 Wacks: 1-10; 20-35 Macaulay: 1-16
3-4	The legal system at work: what we know and how we know it	Wacks: 36-66 Macaulay: selected pages from chapter 2
5-7	The impact of society on law	Friedman: 73-121 (criminal law) Macaulay: selected pages from chapter 3
8-10	The impact of law on society	Friedman: 69-72 (Race); 140-152 (Civil Rights Movement/Equality) Macaulay: selected pages from chapter 4
11-12	The legal systems as a social system: lawyers	Wacks: 108-120 Friedman: 165-170 Macaulay: 789-947
13-14	Thinking Globally Law in Different Cultures: Comparative Legal Systems	Macaulay: selected pages from chapter 6 Wacks: 9-20