

Sociology of Law
SOCIOL 323 Spring 2025
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Catalog Course Description

This course has two main objectives: 1) to provide a theoretical and empirical foundation for the sociological study of law, legal institutions, and legal actors and 2) to enhance critical thinking about the role of law and legal institutions in social life.

Course Format

Social life and technology usage are rapidly changing as a result of exponential growth trends, meaning that it is more important now than ever before to consider what we want out of the future and how to achieve it. Part of creating social change involves how we research, frame, and share information on issues we care about. To this end, our Sociology of Law course is project-based, meaning that you will learn by doing. Each assignment will introduce you to new techniques and thinking tools to support you in using social science research to envision how law can be used to positively shape the future.

This course will have 6 units. Unit 1 will begin our study of sociology of law by introducing the concepts of an “abundance mindset” and of “common sense.” Units 2 through 5 will lead you through recent research in four broad content areas (childhood, gender, freedom of expression, and emerging technologies). Finally, Unit 6 will conclude our semester by reflecting on how research in the sociology of law can support us in developing positive and realistic goals for the future.

Assignments and Grading

You will be graded on two types of assignments: Individual Assignments (which you turn in to the instructor only) and Discussion Assignments (where you post your work to a forum and comment on other students' work). Each assignment prompt is different; specific details of all assignments for the entire semester are in the corresponding sections on Canvas, along with grading criteria attached to each assignment. All assignments receive a grade from 0 to 100, and your final grade will be the mean of all assignments.

Final letter grades will be determined as follows.

Percentage Values	Corresponding Letter Grade
90.00-100.00	A
87.00-89.99	B+
84.00-86.99	B
80.00-83.99	B-

77.00-79.99	C+
74.00-76.99	C
70.00-73.99	C-
60.00-69.99	D
0.00-59.99	F

Expectations for Students

Missed Assignments

Extensions are granted only in cases of emergency (e.g., health-related or employment-related problem). Please communicate with me before completing any missed work.

Data Management

To avoid losing your work (in case of technology failure, hacking, theft, misplacing a device, or other problems), ensure to save your work to at least two different sources in two different physical locations. For example, save a copy of each assignment to both your computer and a cloud drive. Good data management also means saving your work every 10 minutes as you're working, or using a service that periodically saves your work automatically.

Turning in Assignments

Submit all work to Canvas. Submit your work in a commonly used filetype (.doc, .pdf, .rtf, or .odt); do not submit .pages files because they are only compatible with Apple devices. Do not type in the Canvas text box (because your work may be lost if Canvas encounters technical problems); instead, save your work on your own device or cloud and then upload to Canvas once you're finished. If your work will not upload successfully, please email your assignment by the deadline.

Academic Honesty

Students must comply with the university's [academic honesty policy](#).

Resources for Students

Students with Disabilities

Students who require accommodations for this course should register with [Disability Services](#) and should notify me as soon as possible. All documentation about your disability will remain confidential.

Writing Guidelines

Use [ASA format](#) in each assignment this semester for all in-text citations and references page citations. Citation format will be calculated into your grades, but document format (e.g., margins, spacing, headings, etc.) will not, so disregard the information in this link pertaining to document formatting.

Instructor Responsiveness

You are welcome to communicate with me about any assignment in the course, including to ask questions about the assignment prompt or reading material, as well as to let me check your work (or even portions of your work, like notes or a topic sentence) before you turn it in. I generally respond to emails within 24 hours and grade assignments within a week from the due date.

Calendar and Readings

Introductions

Assignment

- Introduction Discussion Due 01/31

Unit 1: Key Concepts in the Sociology of Law

What is “common sense”?

Assignment

- Discussion Assignment 1 Due 02/05 and 02/07

Articles

- Black, Donald. 1979. “Common Sense in the Sociology of Law.” *American Sociological Review* 44(1):18-27.
- Hartzog, Woodrow, Evan Selinger, and Johanna Gunawan. 2023. “Privacy Nicks: How the Law Normalizes Surveillance.” Forthcoming in *Washington University Law Review*.

How can we use an abundance mindset?

Assignment

- Individual Assignment 1 Due 02/14

Articles

- Kizer, Megan, and Jesse Hinueber. 2023. “When Confronting Poverty, Think Abundance, Not Scarcity.” *Educational Leadership* 80(4):47-51.
<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/when-confronting-poverty-think-abundance-not-scarcity>
- Manville, Michael, Paavo Monkkonen, and Michael Lens. 2020. “It's Time to End Single-Family Zoning.” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 86(1):106-112.

Unit 2: Childhood

What are the effects of banning facial recognition technologies?

Assignment

- Discussion Assignment 2 Due 02/19 and 02/21

Article

- Barrett, Lindsey. 2020. “Ban Facial Recognition Technologies for Children—and for Everyone Else.” *Journal of Science & Technology Law* 26:223-285.

What does child labor look like in America?

Assignment

- Individual Assignment 2 Due 02/28

Article

- Zelizer, Viviana A. 1985. *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*. New York: Basic Books. Read Chapter 3, “From Child Labor to Child Work: Redefining the Economic World of Children.”

How can we improve restorative justice approaches?

Assignment

- Discussion Assignment 3 Due 03/05 and 03/07

Articles

- Fronius, Trevor, Hannah Persson, Sarah Guckenburg, Nancy Hurley, and Anthony Petrosino. 2016. "Restorative Justice in US Schools: A Research Review." WestEd.
- Willis, Roxana. 2020. "Let's talk about it': Why Social Class Matters to Restorative Justice." *Criminology & Criminal Justice* 20(2):187-206.

Unit 3: Gender

How does *Roe v. Wade* fit into an international context?

Assignment

- Individual Assignment 3 Due 03/14

Article

- Berer, Marge. 2023. "Challenging the US Supreme Court's Majority Ruling on *Roe v. Wade* at the International Human Rights Level." *Health and Human Rights* 25(1):195-206.

How can laws change to include nonbinary genders?

Assignment

- Discussion Assignment 4 Due 03/26 and 03/28

Articles

- Maier, Megan Brodie. 2020. "Altering Gender Markers on Government Identity Documents: Unpredictable, Burdensome, and Oppressive." *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Law and Social Change* 23(3):203-250.
- Reineck, Katie. 2017. "Running from the Gender Police: Reconceptualizing Gender to Ensure Protection for Non-Binary People." *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law* 24:265-322.

Unit 4: Freedom of Expression

How do laws shape personal expression and dress codes?

Assignment

- Individual Assignment 4 Due 04/04

Articles

- Rima, Wendy. 2018. "The Human Body: The Canvas for Tattoos; The Public Workplace: An Exhibit for a New Form of Art." *Drake Law Review* 66:705-731.
- Friedmann, Jillian R. 2019. "A Girl's Right to Bare Arms: An Equal Protection Analysis of Public-School Dress Codes." *Boston College Law Review* 60:2547-2580.

How should we respond to bans on critical race theory in schools?

Assignment

- Discussion Assignment 5 Due 04/09 and 04/11

Article

- Miller, Vanessa, Frank Fernandez, and Neal H. Hutchens. 2023. "The Race to Ban Race: Legal and Critical Arguments Against State Legislation to Ban Critical Race Theory in Higher Education." *Missouri Law Review* 88:61-106.

Unit 5: Emerging Technologies

How can we construct laws that protect digital privacy?

Assignment

- Individual Assignment 5 Due 04/18

Articles

- Kosseff, Jeff. 2020. "Hacking Cybersecurity Law." *University of Illinois Law Review* 2020(3):811-850.

How do intellectual property laws shape inequality?

Assignment

- Discussion Assignment 6 Due 04/23 and 04/25

Articles

- Baker, Dean. 2022. "Is Intellectual Property the Root of All Evil? Patents, Copyrights, and Inequality." Pp. 275-296 in *The Great Polarization: How Ideas, Power, and Policies Drive Inequality*, edited by R. L. von Arnim and J. E. Stiglitzpp. Columbia University Press.
- Gøtzsche, Peter C. 2018. "Patients not Patents: Drug Research and Development as a Public Enterprise." *European Journal of Clinical Investigation* 48(2).

Unit 6: Looking Forward

How does intersectionality support social science research?

Assignment

- Individual Assignment 6 Due 05/02

Articles

- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989(1):139-167.

How can the sociology of law support us going forward?

Assignment

- Discussion Assignment 7 Due 05/07 and 05/09

Articles

- Bengoetxea, Joxerramon. 2020. "Legal Theory and Sociology of Law." Pp. 7-18 in *Research Handbook on the Sociology of Law*, edited by J. Přibáň. Edward Elgar Publishing.