

Special Topics Course Descriptions

Fall 2025

Abolish the Criminal Legal System? A Colloquium

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): None

This course will examine recent scholarly work on the abolition of the carceral system. Each week we will read a different author's work and then will speak directly with that author. Topics will include: the foundation of abolitionism, abolition and racial justice, police abolition, prison abolition, abolition skepticism, and alternatives to incarceration. Students must be prepared to read complex scholarly articles and to contribute critical thoughts and questions in every class. The evaluation will be based on response papers.

AI & the Practice of Law

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): None

The lawyers of the future will inevitably use AI in their practice - and the best lawyers of the future will be those who know how to use it effectively. In this hands-on course, students will learn about the evolution of AI in the legal industry and gain an understanding of generative AI. The class will examine how AI is being used in law, including by examining case studies and real legal use cases. Students will learn about the responsible and ethical use of AI in line with professional obligations and regulations. Through demos and guest lectures, students will be introduced to some of the startups and technology transforming the way legal work is done today. Students will gain a practical understanding of how to use AI, including through prompt engineering training, and will complete the course better equipped to practice law in a modern environment.

Rather than theory and exams, this course will engage students through written assignments where using AI is mandatory, learning how to verify and check legal facts and edit AI output appropriately. The major coursework for this class is a group project through which students will develop a solution to a legal problem using a legal AI system they will be given access to for the duration of the class. No coding or prior experience with technology is necessary to take this course.

Antisemitism and the Law

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): Legal history courses

This seminar explores antisemitism through the lens of theory and case law. We will become acquainted with leading theories of antisemitism (including debates about how to define it); various general theories (such as anti-classification and anti-subordination) and doctrines (including those under Title VI and VII) of antidiscrimination; and both older and recent legal decisions addressing antisemitism. A central, though by no means exclusive, focus will be the contested boundary between anti-Zionism and antisemitism, and how law is currently responding to that controversy. The seminar will also feature conversations with several distinguished guests (including former U.S. Solicitor General Paul Clement).

Asylum and Refugee Law

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): None

This course examines the legal terrain that has developed in response to forced migration, focusing on U.S. law and policy. Much of the course will focus on the law of asylum—a form of protection available to those who have been persecuted or face future persecution on account of their race, religion, political opinion, and other grounds—as it has developed in the United States. This course will explore the standards for asylum, the application of these standards to people fleeing gender-based violence, gang-based persecution, and other contemporary causes of forced migration, and the challenges that asylum-seekers face when seeking protection in the United States. A portion of the course will be devoted to other types of humanitarian relief, such as protection under the Convention Against Torture, the procedures associated with obtaining protection before U.S. agencies and federal courts, and the detention of people seeking protection from persecution. The course will examine these issues through a doctrinal lens as well as from a practitioner and a policy perspective. Finally, the course will consider the shortfalls of the current asylum and refugee law regime and the political considerations that impact policy in this arena.

Cannabis Law

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): Corporations

This course will explore the unique legal issues facing the burgeoning legal cannabis market throughout the United States. Cannabis – which remains illegal federally but is currently legal in 37 states and Washington D.C. – presents interesting questions of federalism, constitutional law, administrative law and other disciplines. At the same time, the legal cannabis industry is seeking to promote equitable policies that promote social justice and criminal reform for those individuals and families that were adversely affected by the failed War on Drugs. As such, practitioners are often required to navigate complex legal and regulatory regimes while their clients have limited access to banking and capital resources. The course will review current caselaw, regulatory frameworks, policy and ethical considerations with an emphasis on their implications to businesses and entrepreneurs in the legal cannabis space. Students will participate in mock negotiations, lobbying exercises and will have an opportunity to contribute and/or participate in real-time discussions concerning New York's own efforts to legalize the recreational use of cannabis.

Constitutional Theory Seminar

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): None

Is the separation of powers theory capable of meeting its stated purposes? How do race, sex, and class inform our understanding of liberty and equality? Can the Constitution be amended outside of the precepts set forth in Article V, its amending clause? Should courts interpret the Constitution in accord with its original public meaning or treat it as a living document? Or, better yet, should we take the Constitution back from the courts and, if so, give it to whom?

This course will examine the theoretical underpinnings of a range of issues in constitutional law, ultimately trying to determine how we should think about the role of the U.S. Constitution in American law, politics, and society. The class will focus on a different theme each week, often in light of a contemporary controversy, to explore the lively debates about the legitimacy of our national charter and its purpose, the methods of constitutional interpretation and their merits, the functions and efficacy of the Constitution's rights and structural provisions, the nature of constitutional change, and much more.

The course readings will consist mostly of law review articles and other scholarly writings that will present the diverse views and opinions in past and contemporary constitutional debates. Given that the class will be student-driven, regular attendance is required. Final grades will be based on a series of response papers (or with permission from the professor, a research paper), in-class presentation on a topic tracking one of the modules, and class participation.

Corporate Counsel

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): None

This course prepares students to succeed as an in-house corporate counsel by providing hands-on exercises and real-world case studies. Throughout the course, students will cover various topics including contract negotiations, risk assessments, intellectual property, governance and compliance, data privacy, internal investigations, and crisis management.

In today's business world, in-house counsel plays a crucial role in managing legal and regulatory issues, compliance, risk management, and commercial contracts. Therefore, it is essential for law students to understand the expertise required for this role. This comprehensive course equips students with the necessary tools to handle the challenges of being an in-house counsel in today's fast-paced corporate environment.

Critical Perspectives on Land Use

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): None

In this seminar, we will explore and evaluate the myriad ways in which land use law-and decision-making shape and reflect broader issues of social policy — from race to class, religion, age, disability status, and more. We will read cases and ideologically varied legal scholarship regarding local participation, the incidence of eminent domain, the impacts of landmark and historic preservation districts, fair and affordable housing, development and gentrification, transportation, accessibility, religious freedom, the burdens of environmental damage and environmental protection, private residential communities, and more. The goal of this seminar is to foster thoughtful and rigorous engagement with the sometimes-surprising drivers and consequences of land use lawmaking. To that end, students will be responsible for actively participating in all weekly discussions, writing reaction papers, and helping to lead one week's discussion.

Cryptocurrency and Digital Asset Regulation: Law, Policy, the Future of Finance

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): Securities Regulation

This course aims to give students a general understanding of digital assets, cryptocurrency, and blockchain, and the legal, regulatory, and policy issues surrounding them. We will discuss the basics of digital assets, and the current state of regulation in the US, with some discussion of other jurisdictions. We will explore cryptocurrency, tokens, initial coin offerings (ICOs), Decentralized Finance (DeFi), NFTs, and stablecoins. We will discuss compliance issues implicated in digital asset trading and custody. The regulation of trading and digital asset exchanges will be emphasized. Special attention will be paid to the question of which regulatory bodies are best suited to regulate this area, with particular emphasis on the role of the SEC. Current issues in the space also will be covered, such as the recent FTX collapse, BlockFi bankruptcy, and SEC actions including the Ripple litigation.

Dispute Systems Design

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): Mediation Clinic or other ADR, Negotiation or Mediation skills classes

This course focuses on the study and practice of dispute systems design - understanding the structure and design choices made by, and the challenges presented to organizations. This includes examination of court processes and other government or private systems for managing conflict. Dispute systems designers also develop and improve upon mediation and other alternative dispute resolution (ADR) service programs, as well as provide assessments of their appropriateness in various contexts. The knowledge and skills developed in this course are transferable to the emerging needs of practicing attorneys who are more and more frequently called upon as systems designers. Many lawyers, even if they never take the design initiative to lead a project, often serve as stakeholders and representatives of bar or professional associations recruited by systems designers to participate in the design process. This course also enhances the basic mediation and conflict management skills learned in other ADR related courses by application to the dispute system design framework.

Students will be expected to read, write, discuss, critique and participate in simulated exercises. After an overview of dispute systems design theory and principles, students will, through readings, discussions and exercises, study seven actual systems that reflect

dispute systems design principles. Then through a series of additional hands-on role plays and simulations, students will have the opportunity to develop systems design skills and work on a mock consulting team during class. Simulations will lead students through the various stages or architecture of systems design, from taking design initiative through assessment, creating processes and systems and implementation. This course also focuses on advanced mediation and dispute systems design topics, including recent developments in neuroscience and their potential impact on dispute resolution, choice architecture and “nudge” principles, the impact of mediator orientations on program design, restorative justice practices, and transformative mediation. The practical and ethical implications of systems design work will also be explored, as well as opportunities for synthesis of systems design skills into legal practice.

Divorce Process

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): Family Law

Divorce Process is a course that will provide students with an inside look into the different divorce process choices available: litigation, mediation and collaborative law and provide an in-depth and hands-on look at both the similarities and differences between the process options. Students will be provided with an overview of each of the process choices (litigation, mediation, and collaborative law) through lectures, guests, written materials, observation, and participation in mock role plays. The course will take students into a courtroom, mediation room or a collaborative law meeting by providing real-life examples and scenarios to provide students with an experience on each divorce process choice. The course will tackle the myths and misconceptions of divorce through an interactive discussion of current family law and divorce articles and news.

Students will also learn the skills to represent clients going through a divorce in each of the process choices: litigation, mediation, and collaborative law. Students will gain an understanding of each process choice from both the client and attorney/mediator perspective.

Employment Law Drafting

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): Employment Law

Legal drafting is crucial in modern workplaces. Key employment documents set expectations, reflect company culture and help prevent liability. These documents often play a decisive role in employment law cases.

In this practice/simulation course, students will develop the legal skills needed to represent clients in the context of employment law. In the first half of the semester, the course will introduce students to the law and mechanics of employment-related policies and agreements such as employment agreements, non-compete agreements, employee handbooks, severance agreements, and letters to clients. Students will come away with a solid understanding of the statutes, regulations and cases governing these aspects of workplace law, as well as drafting techniques to minimize legal liability.

During the second half, we will follow the progress of a typical civil rights dispute lawsuit involving a terminated employee. Students will learn how to draft EEOC position statements, court pleadings, motions, discovery requests and settlement agreements, with a focus on the strategic skills needed by both management and employee attorneys.

Throughout the semester, students will engage in simulations and exercises in class and complete reading and drafting assignments outside of class, with and without AI assistance.

International Peacemaking

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): None

This course explores the tools of conflict resolution and how they are used to address both international and domestic disputes. We begin with a global perspective, examining strategies used to mediate complex international conflicts. From there, we take a deep dive into one of the world's most enduring and deeply rooted struggles: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Using Israel as a case study of a "wicked" or intractable conflict, we will unpack efforts to foster coexistence, examine Israeli Arab relations, and analyze how dispute resolution is woven into the Israeli legal system. Along the way, students will engage with real-world

challenges and innovative peacebuilding initiatives, gaining insight into what it takes to resolve even the most persistent and polarized conflicts.

The class will meet over the course of the entire year and will travel to Israel to study these issues in person during the January Winter session.

Law and Practice at the United Nations

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): International Law

Most of the hottest issues of the day internationally come to the United Nations, and almost all these issues implicate international law. This course provides an overview of legal issues at the United Nations. It examines the relationship between the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly, including the tensions that sometime exist between these two principal organs of the UN, in particular in situations where the veto has been exercised, such as in the Syria, Ukraine and Israel/Gaza situations. It examines the Security Council's role in making law, institution creating and keeping peace. It also explores the General Assembly's role in the negotiation and adoption of treaties. It further examines the process of becoming a UN Member State.

Readings will include the UN Charter, UN Security Council Resolutions, UN General Assembly Resolutions, and reports of the UN Secretary General.

Law and the Holocaust

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): None

The Holocaust is a historical event, memorialized in books, museums, and memorial sites. However, as a concept, the Holocaust continues to evolve and change over the years, including today, across various arenas—particularly in courts. The constant necessity of the legal world to decide on issues related to the Holocaust creates reciprocal relations between the fields that affect the legal realm, perceptions of the Holocaust, and historical understanding. The course 'Holocaust and the Law' will attempt to dissect the connections and influences between the fields of law history and memory. We will examine various questions such as: How did the law serve as a tool of repression in the hands of the Nazi regime? What mechanisms, procedures and institutions developed to tackle the legal challenges posed by the Holocaust? What role does the testimony of victims play in Holocaust law? How can the law shape historical memory?

In the first part the course we will examine the various legal tools that have developed over the years in legal fields such as criminal law, civil law, international, domestic and transnational law to tackle the challenges posed by the attempt to put the Holocaust on trial. In the second part, we will turn our attention to the impact of Holocaust law on the field of 'transitional justice' that has developed since the 1990s in response to a wave of transitions from authoritarian regimes to democratic regimes. We will chart the contribution of Holocaust trials to transitional justice practice and debates, focusing on the new role of victims in transitional justice processes, the right to truth, the restitution debates, the rise of forensic archeology and DNA technology and the dilemmas regarding the structural role of law in mass human rights violations. Together we will try to understand how an early paradigm of retributive justice has been gradually replaced with reparative justice paradigm.

Law and War

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): International Law

Does law continue to operate in times of war? This seminar will examine the knotty legal questions underlying current wartime debates, with a primary focus on modern conflicts facing the United States in the post-9/11 era. A complex architecture of international and domestic law governs states and state actors during wartime. Evolving threats, new technologies, and domestic politics have tested these legal frameworks, and the domestic and international laws of war continue to adapt to challenges to their relevance and viability. Topics for discussion may include, among others: Cyber operations, Guantanamo detention, targeted killing and drones, interrogation and torture, humanitarian intervention in conflicts like those in Libya and Syria, and the scope of the U.S. President's constitutional and statutory authority to wage war. This seminar will require writing regular reaction papers as well as a government decision-making simulation at the end of the semester.

Law of Settlement

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): None

Most civil disputes settle before trial. Indeed, the statistics are not even particularly close: recent scholarship suggests that between 92 and 98% of civil cases are resolved before trial, depending on the jurisdiction and claims. Why do so many cases settle? When do they

settle? And—perhaps most importantly—how can attorneys facilitate settlement in a manner that is most advantageous for their clients? This course will consider these important questions. First, we will set the stage by examining the full spectrum of processes that are available for resolving civil conflicts, such as negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and litigation. Second, we will review basic concepts of interest-based negotiation theory that lawyers regularly employ to settle disputes. Third, we will review the timeline of most civil litigation from the filing of the complaint through enforcement of judgment. Using this timeline, we will consider “leverage points” when settlement is most likely. Fourth, we will study settlement agreements themselves. What goes into a settlement agreement? What are best practices for drafting such agreements? Can they remain confidential? What happens if one party fails to comply? Finally, we will examine the rules of professional conduct that guide attorneys who negotiate settlement agreements on behalf of clients. Overall, students will emerge from this course with a strong understanding of why and how civil cases settle, including a practical sense of the mechanisms for memorializing and enforcing settlements.

Legal Skills for Law School, the Bar, and Legal Practice

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): None

This course is designed to develop your core legal problem-solving skills through targeted practice and feedback. You'll focus on essential abilities that every lawyer needs: reading comprehension, understanding legal rules, identifying key issues, creating outlines, conducting legal analysis, and writing clearly.

The course emphasizes hands-on learning through focused exercises, group work, and workbook activities. You'll receive detailed feedback on your performance, helping you understand your strengths and areas for improvement while building a clear path toward consistent progress.

These skills directly connect to real-world legal practice and will immediately benefit your performance in law school courses and on the bar exam. The course is specifically designed to prepare you for bar exam success, featuring exercises and practice activities based directly on actual bar exam questions and essay formats.

Trial Practice

Pre/Corequisite: See Course List

Recommended Class(es): None

The first weeks of this course will focus students on how to develop a "theory of the case" - the guiding narrative that will govern how the case will be presented, organized and argued. After establishing that foundation, the course will then be taught in a clinical model: each week, students will be required to perform and develop some mastery of the various aspects of a trial, including handling exhibits, opening statements, direct examination, cross examination, summations, motions in limine, objections, witness preparation, and jury selection. The culmination of the course will be a full jury trial conducted by the instructor.