

Course Syllabus

Introduction to Law

Course code: LEG 101/1

Semester and year: Fall 2025

Day and time: Monday and Wednesday 8:00-9:15

Instructor: Jiří Kašný

Instructor contact: jiri.kasny@aauni.edu

Consultation hours: Monday 11:00-12:00

Credits US/ECTS	3/6	Level	Bachelor
Length	15 weeks	Pre-requisite	None
Contact hours	42 hours	Grading	Letter grade

1. Course Description

This course aims to introduce students to the basic concepts and rules of law. The main objective of the course is to equip students with a practical understanding of the law and to stimulate and deepen their motivation for studying the law. Students should learn how a lawyer approaches legal problems, and become sufficiently familiar with the relevant rules so that they too can advise a hypothetical client of what his rights and liabilities are in a particular situation, for example, if he is charged with a crime, or considers that his private rights have been violated and wishes to sue the perpetrator.

The course surveys the principal rules governing civil and criminal actions, examines how courts operate, what sources of law are available to them, and looks in detail at typical legal problems. A selection of the relevant rules is studied in reasonable depth. In the process, it is hoped that students will, as well as acquiring an overall knowledge of law, also gain a feel for "how law works in practice". Students will try working with resources and will gain a better orientation in the systematics of law. Thus, students will become familiar with the main areas of law, i.e., constitutional law, government, property, contracts and treaties, crimes, torts, legal forms and procedures, legal interpretation, and justice through a comparative approach in European continental tradition, common law tradition, and Russian legal tradition.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the main concepts of law, in particular the nature of legal rights and the remedies available to plaintiffs when their rights are breached (legal wrongs)
- Describe the structure, personnel (judges, lawyers, and parties to the action), and function of courts and the particular rules governing the conduct of legal actions

- Distinguish clearly between the concepts of public and private law, and between natural persons and legal persons
- Understand and be able to illustrate how the jurisdiction of courts over places and persons operates
- Describe the principal legal rules relating to the law of contract, tort, and criminal law, among others, and be able to apply them effectively to particular day-to-day problems
- Explain some of the legal rules which are of particular importance within a business context, especially rules governing the formation of companies, their legal capacity and potential liability, as well as the rules relating to insolvency
- Explain what happens to property and obligations following death
- Describe the principal sources of law and explain how these have come into being
- Make effective use of relevant cases and statutes in support of legal arguments
- Use appropriate legal terminology and language with reasonable confidence and accuracy

3. Reading Material

Required Materials (Available in the Library or at NEO)

- Honoré, Tony. About Law. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005.
- Simpson, A.W.B. Invitation to Law. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1988.
- Apple, James G., A Primer on the Civil-Law System, Washington, D.C., FJC, 1994.
- Case Study Regina v Bentham (2005).

Recommended Materials (Available in the Library or via Interlibrary Loan)

- The Avalon Project. Documents in Law History and Diplomacy at <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/default.asp>
- Schlesinger, R. et al. Schlesinger's comparative law: cases, text, materials. New York: Foundation Press, 2009.
- Simon, T. W. Law and philosophy: An introduction. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2001.
- Federalist Papers. New York, 1787-1788.
- Gearey, Adam, et al. The Politics of the Common Law. Perspectives, Rights, Processes, Institutions. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Weinrib, Ernest. The Idea of Private Law. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Pipes, Richard. Property and Freedom. Vintage Books, 1999.
- Fried, Charles. Contract as Promise. A Theory of Contractual Obligation. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Glenn, Patrick. Legal Traditions of the World. Sustainable Diversity in Law. Oxford University Press, 2007.

4. Teaching methodology

The format of this course is primarily lecture – research – reading – presentation – discussion – writing. The classroom and the NEO website are the main platforms of communication. Students are invited to participate in class, to read and study the required and suggested materials and to do their own research-reading.

The module will be taught over the period of one semester. The module runs for three hours a week in two sessions for 14 weeks.

5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
1.	Topic: Fundamental of Law, Basic Legal Profession

1/9/2025	Description: Reading a professional text, legal information and how to search for it. What is law and custom? How legal systems protect society's fundamental interests and the rights of individuals. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 1-21 Assignments/Deadlines: approximately 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations
2. 3/9	Topic: Presentations and discussion Description: The review presentations of the introductory topics: law and custom; the role of legal systems; the protection of society's fundamental interests and the rights of individuals. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 1-21 Assignments/Deadlines: approximately 2 hours of research reading
3. 8/9	Topic: Constitutional law and Government Description: What are the state constitutions and what function do they perform? Why are some legal limits on the power of government necessary? What are the legal ways of limiting the possible misuse of the power of government? International human rights law: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, European Convention on Human Rights, and European Court of Human Rights. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 23-34 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations Home Essay 1 – detailed instructions will be distributed and discussed in class
4. 10/9	Topic: Presentations and discussion Description: The presentations and review of the role of constitutional law and the legal ways of limiting the potential misuse of the power of government and protecting the rights? Reading: Honore, Law, p. 23-34 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading
5. 15/9	Topic: Attitudes Toward Law Description: We will study the concept of the attitude toward law and examine a descriptive scale to measure the attitudes towards law. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 1-21 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations Home Essay 1 – discussion of the draft
6. 17/9	Topic: Presentations and discussion Description: The review presentations of the concept of the attitude toward law and a descriptive scale to measure the attitude towards law. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 1-21 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading Home Essay 1 – discussion of the draft
7. 22/9	Topic: Property and Ownership Description: What counts as property from the legal point of view? How and why do laws protect property? Reading: Honore, Law, p. 35-43 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations Home Essay 1 – due
8. 24/9	Topic: Presentations and discussion Description: The review presentations of the property law topics. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 35-43

	Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading
9. 29/9	Topic: Contracts and Treaties Description: Contract law, contract language and negotiations, solving contractual problems. What we consider as agreements and which of them are legally binding. The difference between contracts and treaties. How could be contracts and treaties enforced legally. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 45-52 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations Home essay 1 – feedback and evaluation
10. 1/10	Topic: Presentations and discussion Description: The review presentations of contract law. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 45-52 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading
11. 6/10	Topic: Tort Law Description: What the aims of tort law are - when it is fair to make someone who harms another pay them compensation - what interests tort law protects - the problem of intentional, negligence and strict liability. Defamation law, libel and slander. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 65-75 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations
12. 8/10	Topic: Presentations and discussion Description: The review presentations of tort law and the problem of intentional, negligence and strict liability. Some specific issues in negligence and practice mediation. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 65-75 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading
13. 13/10	Topic: Criminal Law, Courts and Legal Procedures Description: The need for criminal law in society (a cause) - what the aims of criminal law are (a goal) - what type of behavior the state does and should make criminal - when it is fair to hold someone guilty of a crime in a particular case. Working with a court decision. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 53-64; Case Study Regina v Bentham (2005) Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations Home Essay 2 – detailed instructions will be distributed and discussed in class
14. 15/10	Topic: Presentations and discussion Description: The review presentations and discussion of the need, the aims of criminal law, what type of behavior the state should make criminal and when it is fair to hold someone guilty of a crime in a particular case. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 53-64; Case Study Regina v Bentham (2005) Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations
15. 20/10	Topic: Crime and Tort: Comparison Description: What are the aims of crime and tort law – comparative study. In-class mediation covering negotiations and drafting. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 53-75 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations Home Essay 2 – discussion of the draft
16.	Topic: Presentations and discussion

22/10	Description: The review presentations and discussion of the crime and tort law. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 53-75 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading Home Essay 2 – discussion of the draft
27-31/10	Midterm break
17. 3/11	Topic: Legal Forms and Procedures Description: The reasons for having forms and procedures in general; the reasons for having forms e.g., as the birth certificate, driver license, marriage, the will; the function of the right of defense in procedures; the question of fairness in a dispute of the citizen vs. the state. Court procedures and court decision. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 77-86 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations
18. 5/11	Topic: Presentations and discussion Description: The review presentations legal forms and procedures e.g., as the birth certificate, driver license, marriage, the will; the function of the right of defense in procedures; the question of fairness in a dispute of the citizen vs. the state. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 77-86 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research study Home essay 2 – due
19. 10/11	Topic: European Continental Legal Tradition Description: The key historical moments of Civil Law tradition. Typical characteristics of the legal systems in European Continental law. The influence of the Jewish and Christian values on European law. Study and reading of typical legal sources and court procedures. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 9-21 Apple, James G., <i>A Primer on the Civil-Law System</i>, Washington, D.C., FJC, 1994 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations Home essay 2 – feedback and evaluation
20. 12/11	Topic: Presentations and discussion Description: The review presentations and discussion of the key historical moments of Civil Law tradition, the sources of law and court procedure. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 9-21 Apple, James G., <i>A Primer on the Civil-Law System</i>, Washington, D.C., FJC, 1994 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading
21. 19/11	Topic: Common Law Tradition Description: Key historical moments of Common Law tradition. Typical characteristics of the Anglo-American legal system. Comparison of world legal systems. Study and reading of typical legal sources and court procedures. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 9-21 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations Home essay 3 – detailed instructions will be distributed and discussed in class
22.	Topic: Presentations and discussion

24/11	Description: The presentations and discussion of the key historical moments of Common Law tradition. Typical characteristics of the Anglo-American legal system. Comparison of world legal systems. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 9-21 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading
23. 26/11	Topic: Russian Legal Tradition Description: The key historical moments of Russian Legal Tradition. Typical characteristics of the legal systems in Russian law. Study and reading of typical legal sources and court procedures. Reading: Russian Law at the Encyclopedia Britannica Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations Home essay 3 – discussion of the draft
24. 1/12	Topic: Presentations and review Description: The review presentations of the key historical moments of Russian Legal Tradition. Reading: Russian Law at the Encyclopedia Britannica Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading Home essay 3 – discussion of the draft
25. 3/12	Topic: Comparative law Description: Comparative approach to the studies of legal traditions, especially to the sources of law, court procedures, legal theories. Reading: individual research Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations
26. 8/12	Topic: Presentations and discussion Description: The review presentations and discussion of the comparative approach to the studies of legal traditions, especially of the sources of law, court procedures, legal theories. Reading: individual research Assignments/Deadlines: Home essay 3 – due
27. 10/12	Topic: Final exam Description: Presentation of final home essay 3 – discussion – feedback – evaluation Reading: none Assignments/Deadlines: none
28. 15/12/2025	Topic: Final exam Description: Presentation of final home essay 3 – discussion – feedback – evaluation Reading: none Assignments/Deadlines: none

6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assessment in this course will be based upon attendance, class participation, presentation and discussion (10%), home essays 1, 2 and 3 (30% each). Preparation and writing of the essays (workload) include participation in classes, reading and individual research reading.

Assignment	Workload (average)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Class Participation	42	10%	Students will participate in class presentation and discuss	1, 2, 3

and Presentations			meaningfully the topics of the course that have been already covered in accordance with the learning outcomes (see above).	
Home essay 1	36	30%	Students will discuss meaningfully the topics of the course that have been already covered in accordance with the learning outcomes (see above).	1, 2
Home essay 2	36	30%	Students will discuss meaningfully the topics of the course that have been already covered in accordance with the learning outcomes (see above).	1, 2
Home essay 3	36	30%	Students will discuss meaningfully the topics of the course that have been already covered in accordance with the learning outcomes (see above).	1, 2
TOTAL	150	100%		

*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

7. Detailed description of the assignments

Class participation and presentations:

Each student will prepare and present two short (5 minutes) presentations in class, first presentation before the midterm break (Sept 3 - Oct 22, 2025), second presentation after the midterm break (Nov 3 – Dec 10, 2025). The topics and the schedule of the presentations will be distributed and discussed in the first and the following classes. Each presentation is 5%.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Content	40%
Presentation	40%
Discussion	20%

Home essay 1:

Home essay 1 should be about 6 pages long. The detailed instructions incl. the style, the topics of the home essay will be distributed and discussed in class on Sept 8, 2025. The essay is due by Sept 22, 2025 in electronic version via Neo-Turnitin. Assessed areas include content, resources, structure and argument, and style and form of the essay; the result makes 30% of the final grade.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Content	30%
Resources	20%
Structure and argument	30%
Style and form	20%

Home essay 2:

Home essay 2 should be about 6 pages long. The detailed instructions incl. the style, the topics of the home essay will be distributed and discussed in class on Oct 13, 2025. The essay is due by Nov 5, 2025 in electronic version via Neo-Turnitin. Assessed areas include content, resources, structure and argument, and style and form of the essay; the result makes 30% of the final grade.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Content	30%
Resources	20%
Structure and argument	30%
Style and form	20%

Home essay 3:

Home essay 3 should be about 6 pages long. The detailed instructions incl. the style, the topics of the home essay will be distributed and discussed in class on Nov 19, 2025. The essay is due by Dec 8, 2025 in electronic version via Neo-Turnitin. Assessed areas include content, resources, structure and argument, and style and form of the essay; the result makes 30% of the final grade.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Content	30%
Resources	20%
Structure and argument	30%
Style and form	20%

8. General Requirements and School Policies

General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work. Please see the AAU intranet for a [summary of key policies](#) regarding coursework.

Course specific requirements

There are no special requirements or deviations from AAU policies for this course.