

Course Syllabus

Introduction to Law

Course code: LEG 101/1

Semester and year: Spring 2025

Day and time: Monday and Wednesday 8:15-9:30

Instructor: Jiří Kašný

Instructor contact: jiri.kasny@aauni.edu

Consultation hours: Monday 11:00-12:00

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| 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 theoretical and practical understanding of 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 likely to be 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.

Students will become familiar with the main areas of law, i.e., constitutional law, government, property, contracts and treaties, crimes, torts, forms and procedures, legal interpretation, and justice through a comparative approach in European continental tradition and common law tradition.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

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

- discuss critically the role of law in contemporary societies
- 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
- evaluate the application of foundational principles of law in his/her future studies
- demonstrate knowledge of the basic principles of constitutional, property, contract, criminal, and tort law and comparative approach to the civil law and common law systems
- distinguish clearly between the concepts of public and private law, and between natural persons and legal persons
- 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>
- Federalist Papers. New York, 1787-1788.
- Gearey, Adam, et all. 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, p. 224-272.

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 for 14 weeks.

5. Course Schedule

| Date | Class Agenda |
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| 1. 3/2/ 2025 | <p>Topic: Introduction to Law Description: 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</p> |
| 2. 5/2 | <p>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</p> |
| 3. 10/2 | <p>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 the government? 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</p> |

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| 4. 12/2 | <p>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? Reading: Honore, Law, p. 23-34 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading</p> |
| 5. 17/2 | <p>Topic: Attitudes Toward Law Description: We will study the concept of the attitude toward law and examine a descriptive scale to measure the attitude 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</p> |
| 6. 19/2 | <p>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</p> |
| 7. 24/2 | <p>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</p> |
| 8. 26/2 | <p>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</p> |
| 9. 3/3 | <p>Topic: Contracts and Treaties Description: 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</p> |
| 10. 5/3 | <p>Topic: Presentations and discussion Description: The review presentations of contract law. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 45-52 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading</p> |
| 11. 10/3 | <p>Topic: Torts 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. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 65-75 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations</p> |
| 12. 12/3 | <p>Topic: Presentations and discussion Description: The review presentations of tort law and the problem of intentional, negligence and strict liability. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 65-75</p> |

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| | Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading |
| 13. 17/3 | <p>Topic: Crimes 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. 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</p> |
| 14. 19/3 | <p>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</p> |
| 24/3-28/3 | Midterm break |
| 15. 31/3 | <p>Topic: Crime and Tort: Comparison Description: What are the aims of crime and tort law – comparative study. 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</p> |
| 16. 2/4 | <p>Topic: Presentations and discussion 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</p> |
| 17. 7/4 | <p>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. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 77-86 Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations Home essay 2 – due</p> |
| 18. 9/4 | <p>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</p> |
| 19. 14/4 | <p>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 Jewish and Christian values on European law. Reading: Honore, Law, p. 9-21</p> |

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| | <p>Apple, James G., <i>A Primer on the Civil-Law System</i>, Washington, D.C., FJC, 1994</p> <p>Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations Home essay 2 – feedback and evaluation</p> |
| 20. 16/4 | <p>Topic: Presentations and discussion</p> <p>Description: The review presentations and discussion of the key historical moments of Civil Law tradition, the sources of law and court procedure.</p> <p>Reading: Honore, Law, p. 9-21 Apple, James G., <i>A Primer on the Civil-Law System</i>, Washington, D.C., FJC, 1994</p> <p>Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading</p> |
| 21. 23/4 | <p>Topic: Common Law Tradition</p> <p>Description: Key historical moments of Common Law tradition. Typical characteristics of the Anglo-American legal system. Comparison of world legal systems.</p> <p>Reading: Honore, Law, p. 9-21</p> <p>Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations Home essay 3 – detailed instructions will be distributed and discussed in class</p> |
| 22. 28/4 | <p>Topic: Presentations and discussion</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Reading: Honore, Law, p. 9-21</p> <p>Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading</p> |
| 23. 30/4 | <p>Topic: Russian Legal Tradition</p> <p>Description: The key historical moments of Russian Legal Tradition. Typical characteristics of the legal systems in Russian law.</p> <p>Reading: Russian Law at the Encyclopedia Britannica</p> <p>Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations Home essay 3 – discussion of the draft</p> |
| 24. 5/5 | <p>Topic: Presentations and review</p> <p>Description: The review presentations of the key historical moments of Russian Legal Tradition.</p> <p>Reading: Russian Law at the Encyclopedia Britannica</p> <p>Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of research reading Home essay 3 – discussion of the draft</p> |
| 25. 7/5 | <p>Topic: Comparative law</p> <p>Description: Comparative approach to the studies of legal traditions, especially to the sources of law, court procedures, legal theories.</p> <p>Reading: individual research</p> <p>Assignments/Deadlines: 2 hours of home study to prepare the review presentations</p> |
| 26. 12/5 | <p>Topic: Presentations and discussion</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Reading: individual research</p> <p>Assignments/Deadlines: Home essay 3 – due</p> |

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| 27. 14/5 | Topic: Final exam Description: Presentation of final home essay 3 – discussion – feedback – evaluation Reading: none Assignments/Deadlines: none |
| 28. 19/5/2025 | 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 and Presentations | 42 | 10% | Students will participate in class presentation and discuss meaningfully the topics of the course that have been already covered in accordance with the learning outcomes (see above). | 1, 2, 3 |
| 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 (Feb 5-March 3, 2025), second presentation after the midterm break (March 31-May 14, 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 February 10, 2025. The essay is due by February 24, 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 March 17, 2025. The essay is due by April 7, 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 April 23, 2025. The essay is due by May 12, 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.