**Phil 311: Philosophy of Law**

George Mason University  Fall 2021  MW 3:00pm-4:15pm

**Instructor**: Molly Wilder  **Email**: [mwilder3@gmu.edu](mailto:mwilder3@gmu.edu)  **Phone**: 240-801-6082

**Office Hours**: See my [booking page](https://10to8.com/book/ieqyfnihyoqfmibozn/)

# Course Description

Law structures our lives and the world we inhabit in myriad ways. It regulates how we interact with others, where we go to school, what kinds of things we can own and sell, and how we can be sanctioned if we act outside the law. In this course, we will consider a variety of philosophical questions raised by life within the American legal system. The first portion of the course will consider classic conceptual questions the nature of law generally and its relation to morality. In the rest of the course we will consider philosophical questions that arise in three areas of American law: public law (constitutional law, criminal procedure, and criminal law), private law (property law, tort law, and contract law), and the professional ethics of lawyers. Students will be asked to recognize and reflect on the impact of law in others' lives and as well as their own, and decide whether and how they plan to impact the law through their own actions.

# Course Goals

1. Become comfortable reading and discussing a variety of philosophical theories, concepts, and arguments relevant to the philosophical study of law.
2. Empathize with and understand perspectives that you may not share.
3. Develop the ability to write effectively for a diverse public audience in response to difficult philosophical texts.
4. Develop your own positions and arguments on the philosophical subject of law.
5. Apply your understanding of philosophy and law to your analysis of current events, what you are learning in other classes, and how you make decisions in your everyday life.

# Blackboard Login Instructions

Access to [MyMason](http://mymason.gmu.edu) and GMU email are required to participate successfully in this course. **Please make sure to update your computer and prepare yourself to begin using the online format before the first day of class**. On [the IT Support Center](http://itservices.gmu.edu/) website, navigate to [the Student Support page](https://coursessupport.gmu.edu/Students/) for help and information about Blackboard. In the menu bar to the left you will find all the tools you need to become familiar with for this course. Take time to learn each. Make sure you run a system check a few days before class. Become familiar with the attributes of Blackboard and online learning.

# Technology Requirements

**Hardware:** You will need access to a Windows or Macintosh computer with at least 2 GB of RAM and access to a fast and reliable broadband internet connection (e.g., cable, DSL). A larger screen is recommended for better visibility of course material. You will need speakers or headphones to hear recorded content. To participate in Zoom class meetings, you will need a functioning microphone and video camera compatible with your computer. For the amount of hard disk space required taking a distance education course, consider and allow for the storage amount needed to install any additional software and space to store work that you will do for the course. If you consider the purchase of a new computer, please go to [Patriot](https://patriottech.gmu.edu/get-started/) Tech to see recommendations.

**Software:** You will need a browser and operating system that are listed compatible or certified with the Blackboard version available on the [myMason Portal](http://mymason.gmu.edu). See [supported browsers and operating systems](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_SP_10_and_SP_11/Student/002_Browser_Support_SP_11). Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OSX 10.13 or higher) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, etc., with a consistent 1.5 Mbps [megabits per second] download speed or higher.) To attend synchronous class meetings and office hours, you will need to download the Zoom app; more information on the [Zoom ITS page](https://its.gmu.edu/service/zoom/). To submit your papers and peer review comments, you will need Microsoft Word; more information on the [Microsoft 365 Apps ITS page](https://its.gmu.edu/service/microsoft-365-apps-for-enterprise/).

**Note:** If you are using an employer-provided computer or corporate office for class attendance, please verify with your systems administrators that you will be able to install the necessary applications and that system or corporate firewalls do not block access to any sites or media types.

# Student Privacy & Zoom Meeting Recordings

**By federal law, any provided course materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.** Likewise, synchronous Zoom meetings of those meetings must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household. All of our synchronous Zoom meetings in this class will be recorded to accommodate students unable to attend particular meetings. Note, however, that **breakout (small group) discussions during our meetings will not be recorded; only the full class discussions will be recorded**. Recordings will be stored on Blackboard and will only be accessible to students taking this course during this semester. **Students are prohibited from making their own recordings or sharing access to recordings.**

# Required & Recommended Texts

**You do not need to buy any texts for this course.** You can access all required reading materials through our Blackboard site under "Read" in the side bar and then "Weekly Readings."

# Assignments and Grading Breakdown

10% Reading Quizzes

10% Partner Discussion Briefs

10% Writing Exercises

10% Interpretive Paper

10% Creative Paper

15% Argumentative Paper First and Second Drafts

35% Argumentative Paper Final Draft

Participation (can bump grade up or down)

# Reading Quizzes

Reading Quizzes are **due Sundays at 10pm** and the questions will typically be posted a week in advance. There will be a reading quiz every week of class. Quizzes will consist of 4 questions, each worth 10 points—so 40 points for the entire quiz. Typically 2 questions will be on upcoming material and 2 on review material. On weeks when there is no new reading material assigned, quizzes will consist entirely of review questions. Reading Quizzes count for 10% of your overall grade.

Typical questions might ask for a definition of a central term explained in the text, a specific conclusion discussed at length in the text, or a difference between two philosophers’ positions on an issue. For each question, I will provide the page number on which the best answer to the question is found in the relevant class reading (which you will know based on the philosopher cited in the question). That way you do not have search through the entire reading for answers; you just have to show me that you've understood the section I direct you to. **All answers must be paraphrases in your own words; you may not directly quote from the reading.**

# Reading Quizzes Rubric (per question)

10 points: Good work. Demonstrates strong understanding of readings.

5 points: Acceptable work. Demonstrates partial understanding of readings.

0 points: Unacceptable work. Assignment is not turned in on time or fails to demonstrate understanding of readings.

# Partner Discussions & Class Questions

Kind and productive philosophical dialogue is central for the learning objectives of this course. For that reason, I have structured this course to encourage students to engage in philosophical dialogue both in and outside of class. For the first couple of weeks, you’ll be asked to pick a friend or family member to talk about a specific topic with. After add/drop ends, **I will randomly assign each student a discussion partner to meet with once a week outside of class.** You will change partners periodically, so that you will meet with 3 different partners over the course of the semester. **I strongly, strongly, strongly recommend that these meetings happen over video chat**, but, if necessary, you may instead schedule a discussion over the phone. Before meeting, each student will complete the reading for the week on their own.

**You must record your discussion**--ideally a video recording, but an audio recording is also acceptable. **Your discussion must be at least 30 minutes long and center on the readings for the upcoming week in class. After each meeting, each individual student will be required to submit access information for the recording, 2 questions, and a comment that will serve as discussion starters in our synchronous Zoom meetings.** See more detailed instructions on our class Blackboard website. Partner discussions will be worth 10 points each, and as long as you complete them in a way that demonstrates that you made an effort to think through the readings with your partner and prepare questions for class discussion, you will receive full credit. Partner discussions are due by 10pm on Sundays.

Your partner discussions will largely dictate the structure of class discussion. Before class, I will select and organize those submitted discussion questions which I expect will lead to a productive discussion. In this way, class discussion will center around your questions about and experience of the texts. **If I select one of your questions, I may ask you to raise the question and explain why you asked it during class. In that way, this course will involve ‘cold-calling’—but I will only ever cold-call you about a question you submitted or on a topic you have voluntarily discussed previously in class.**

**It is your responsibility to contact your partner well in advance of the partner discussion deadline and set up a meeting.** **If your partner has not responded on Thursday at the latest, email me and let me know.** I will then email your partner directly, and if she or he still doesn’t respond, I will give you permission to talk with a friend or family member instead of your assigned partner. If you do not complete these steps, partner discussions completed without your assigned partner will not receive credit. Partner discussions and class questions count for 10% of your overall grade.

# Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions Rubric

10 points: Good work. Includes both required elements: a 30-minute recording of discussion relating to the weekly readings with their assigned partner and 2 discussion questions to ask the class in our Zoom meetings.

5 points: Acceptable work. Includes some of the required elements, but not all.

0 points: Unacceptable work. Assignment is not turned in on time or fails to include any of the required elements.

Writing Exercises

To prepare for your short and long papers, you will be required to complete several in-class writing exercises on skills such as paraphrasing and writing charitable objections. Typically I will give you time to complete these exercises in class on Tuesdays and then we will go over your submissions on Thursdays. These assignments will only become available on Canvas during class time, but if you are absent you can complete them outside of class for full credit, as long as you do so by 6pm on the day they become available. **Your submissions will be graded on good faith completion, but keep in mind that I may use your submission as an anonymous example--so only submit material you are comfortable sharing with your classmates.**

I strongly encourage you to put real effort into the exercises, even though they are not graded on merit. **They give you practice on the skills you need to produce the specific style of writing I ask for in your papers: academically rigorous but inclusive and public-friendly philosophy. This is a style that you may not have been asked to do in a class before, and most students find it quite difficult.**Before I started using the writing exercises, I rarely got more than two or three A level papers for the first paper, through student grades improved over the course of the semester. The writing exercises have typically doubled that number, and I continue to refine them to be as helpful for you as possible.

**Though I have challenging standards for grading your papers, I also make every effort to be transparent about what I am looking for.** The writing exercises help me do that in several ways. First, for each writing exercise, I give you in-depth guidelines for the specific skill it asks you to practice. Second, I will give general feedback on the exercises to the entire class, often including examples you submit. Third, if you want individualized feedback on any writing exercise, you're always encouraged to come to office hours and talk about it.

Finally, I recommend using these exercises as an opportunity to play. Writing is a skill, not a set of rules. While I can give you guidelines and feedback, you need to practice thoughtfully to figure out how to make it work for you. **Like playing piano or pitching a baseball, writing is a creative practice in which the best writers are the ones who develop a style that is distinctively their own.** These writing exercises are a great place both to practice the kind of writing I am asking for in your papers and to figure out what style works for you.

Writing Exercises Rubric

10 points: Satisfactory work. Demonstrates a strong good faith effort to respond to the prompt.

5 points: Acceptable work. Demonstrates a minimally acceptable good faith effort to respond to the prompt.

0 points: Unacceptable work. Assignment is not turned in on time or fails to demonstrate a good faith effort to respond to the prompt.

# Participation in Class Discussion

In-class discussion will be one of your primary modes of learning in this course. For this reason, your participation in our synchronous Zoom meetings may significantly affect your overall grade. Excellent participation will raise your overall grade by a step, so B to B+, etc, and unsatisfactory participation will lower your overall grade by a step. If your participation is satisfactory, neither unsatisfactory nor excellent, your grade will be unaffected. About half way through the semester, I will provide a preliminary participation grade so that you can gauge how you are doing.

Satisfactory participation includes:

* participating voluntarily in video chat (with a video feed) or approved participation alternative at least 2 times each week
* consistently having your discussion questions/comment ready-to-hand during class discussion and fresh in your mind so that you can quickly raise a question and explain what led you to ask it
* consistently having paper or electronic copies of the day’s reading ready-to-hand so you can quickly find relevant passages

Excellent participation includes all the requirements of Satisfactory participation as well as significant effort towards the following:

* helping create a welcoming and engaging atmosphere for other students
* attentively and empathetically listening to classmates’ contributions
* making comments that invite specific classmates to join or rejoin a discussion
* helping everyone in the class get on the same page by summarizing a discussant’s contribution or asking a clarifying question
* directly engaging with a classmate by offering a friendly amendment, kindly-worded critique, or a question that challenges that classmate to think about the point more deeply
* contributing to discussions that are productive for the entire class
* consciously staying on topic or bringing discussion back to the original question
* when relevant, providing the class with a summary of a passage or text
* when making a point that requires background knowledge not covered in class, providing a quick summary for those who may not have that knowledge
* proposing an original interpretation of a passage or text
* proposing an original reason to support or not support a point in the text
* volunteering to answer a question even when you are not sure your answer is adequate
* arguing for a minority position: for example, challenging a position that most of the class agrees on or one that I have presented as the best position

Unsatisfactory participation includes:

* participating voluntarily in video chat (with a video feed) or approved participation alternative less than 2 times each week
* failing to engage in discussion directly with peers
* speaking in a way that is intentionally harmful to others
* monopolizing discussion time to the detriment of classmates

This course is structured around robust in-class discussion. **If you are the type of student who greatly dislikes speaking in a virtual classroom, for whatever reason, this may not be the best class for you.** However, if you are this type of student but very strongly wish to take the course, I am willing to offer alternative methods of demonstrating discussion skills. Please make an appointment or e-mail me to request this sort of accommodation.

# Video Feed Policy

**My expectation is that you will participate in class discussion with your video feed on for the entire class discussion.** I recognize that technology doesn’t always cooperate and that some students may understandably want to hide distracting visual environments. For the latter, consider using a Zoom background—though note, I generally do not recommend using a background unless you’re doing so to avoid visual distractions, as backgrounds themselves can be distracting. If you do use a background, please pick something realistic and not distracting, like a bookcase. Also, for the record, I absolutely want to meet your cat, dog, or other pet, so don’t be shy on their account. However, I will grant permission to leave your camera off on a case-by-case basis. Please email me to request this sort of accommodation. **If you fail to have your video feed on for most of class without permission, it will count as an absence.**

# Attendance

If you know in advance that you will miss a synchronous Zoom meeting, I do appreciate if you let me know; that information helps me plan for class discussion. But generally, you do not need to tell me why you will miss or have missed a class; I respect your judgment about when your well-being is better served by missing rather than coming to class. **You never need to apologize to me for missing class. I promise that I will in no way be personally offended by your absence. However, multiple absences will likely affect your participation grade unless you request an alternative way to earn participation.**

If you miss a class meeting, you miss out on many of the benefits of class discussion. I recommend watching the recorded session and taking notes. Better yet, watch the discussion and then talk to a classmate or two about what stood out to you. Since my pedagogical approach is primarily to facilitate productive discussion rather than convey specific information, I neither prepare lecture notes nor take extensive notes during class, so I cannot provide you with notes on missed classes.

# Content Warnings

**In this course, we will discuss issues that some students may find challenging or personally harmful to talk about.** Look over the readings carefully; if there are many topics you anticipate not feeling safe talking about, this class may not be the one for you. Generally, I will not issue warnings for particular classes or assignments, because I do not know what topics individual students might find harmful. If you have particular concerns or questions about the content we will be addressing, or if you would like advance notice about particular topics, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Note that your discussion questions give you some control over what you will be asked about in class. If you do not want to discuss a topic in class, it should not be mentioned on your discussion questions. **I will not cold call you on a topic unless have already voluntarily raised the topic with your discussion partner or in class.** Likewise, keep in mind the control you have over which content you engage with when you choose your paper topics. **You will be expected to do peer review for all paper assignments, so do not write about anything you would be uncomfortable discussing with your classmates.**

Challenging and potentially harmful topics may arise unexpectedly during class discussion. I will make every effort to facilitate a classroom atmosphere in which we can discuss any topic kindly and productively. **In our Zoom meetings, you can always send me a private chat message** if you wish to bring something to my attention without letting your classmates know who it was, and I will do my best to respond appropriately. However, such efforts only go so far, and so I want to remind you that your well-being is of primary importance. If you think it would be healthier for you, you may decide to mentally check out and ignore the discussion, or if you feel it is necessary, mute or leave the discussion for a short period. **In general, feel free to leave discussion for a short bathroom break or to get a beverage.** As long as you are present for most of the discussion, short absences will not count against your participation.

# Papers

The primary mode of evaluation in this course is through written assignments. My expectation is that you will use synchronous Zoom discussion to try out different interpretations and arguments, which you will then clarify and make more precise in your written work. Keep in mind that all written assignments for this course should be written for a general audience – not an academic audience. That means the level of clarity and organization should aspire to that of professional public philosophy, such as that displayed in [The Stone](https://www.nytimes.com/column/the-stone) column of *The New York Times*. These assignments are designed to strengthen your writing skills, particularly those of self-editing, peer editing, and substantial revision. **You must earn a passing grade on all final paper drafts in order to pass the class.**

Interpretive Paper First Draft (300-500 words): With respect to content, the task in this paper is for you to present a plausible and charitable interpretation of a brief passage from one of our readings. I will provide you several passages to choose from. With respect to form, the focus will be on paragraph-level clarity and organization. The overall goal is to demonstrate a deep engagement with and understanding of the text. **I will not be commenting on this draft, but I will check your draft for completion and major structural problems. If you do not complete this draft and peer reviews, I will reduce your Interpretive Paper Final Draft grade by a step (ex: B to B-).**

**All students are required to meet with me by Friday, February 12th to discuss their plans for this course.** You do not need to prepare anything for this meeting, though I recommend you think about the following questions: What do you anticipate being the most difficult part of the course for you? What obstacles, if any, do you see as potentially preventing your academic success this semester? If you do not come to a Course Planning Meeting, it will reduce your Final Draft grade by a step (ex: A- to B+).

Interpretive Paper Final Draft (300-500 words):You will have the opportunity to revise your paper based on your peers’ comments. This draft I will grade and provide comments on. **This draft counts for 10% of your overall grade.**

Creative Paper First Draft (500-800 words): With respect to content, the task in this paper is for you to compose a compelling narrative related to the course topic. I will provide prompts, but will allow for significant creative license. With respect to form, the focus will be on creating an engaging and easy-to-follow reader experience. The overall goal is to show an understanding of how to hook and keep the attention of a diverse public audience. See the Creative Fiction Writing Guidelines and example papers on Blackboard for more detail on what I will be looking for.

Your draft must be at least 500 words, and you must email the draft to your assigned peer reviewers and CC me. I will not be commenting on this draft, but I will check your draft for completion and major structural problems. **If you do not complete this draft and peer reviews, I will reduce your Creative Paper Final Draft grade by a step (ex: B to B-).**

Creative Paper Final Draft (500-800 words):You will have the opportunity to revise your paper based on your peers’ comments. This draft I will grade and provide comments on. The broad word count range is meant to facilitate prioritizing reader experience. **This draft counts for 10% of your overall grade.**

Argumentative First Draft (1000-1200 words): With respect to content, the task in this paper is for you to argue for a specific philosophical position. With respect to form, the focus will be on the clarity and organization of the piece as a whole. The overall goal is to argue persuasively for a conclusion that is charitable in its characterization of objections and opposing views, well-supported by any relevant texts, and developed in depth through logical reasoning, examples, or other evidence. I will provide prompts to help you in that process, but you will have a great deal of latitude in what you want to write about.

**All students are required to meet with me by Friday, October 15th to discuss their Argumentative paper topics. If you do not come to a topic meeting, it will reduce your Argumentative Final Draft grade by a step (ex: A- to B+).** Your draft must be at least 1000 words, and you must email the draft to your assigned peer reviewers and CC me. I will not be commenting on this draft, but I will check your draft for completion and major structural problems. If you do not complete the draft and peer reviews, it will reduce your Argumentative Paper Second Draft grade by a step (ex: B to B-).

Argumentative Second Draft (1000-1200 words): You will have the opportunity to revise your paper based on your peers’ comments. This draft I will grade and provide comments on. **I will grade it using the same standards that I will use in grading the revised draft.** **This draft counts for 15% of your overall grade.**

Argumentative Final Draft (1000-1200 words): You will have the opportunity to revise your draft based on my comments. If you do not revise, your Argumentative Final Draft grade will automatically be copied to this draft as well. I will grade this draft, but provide comments only on request. **This draft counts for 35% of your overall grade.**

# Papers Rubric

Note: **The points you see below have nothing to do with how I actually grade--only the letters.** I don’t have a rubric that says you get 20 points for clarity, 20 points for organization and so on and then add all the points up. Rather I evaluate your paper holistically based on the general criteria listed below and the more specific Paper Writing Guidelines posted on Blackboard. I prefer the letter system because it allows me to be flexible in my grading so that if, for example, your tone is overly academic, but you raise some really great examples that go above and beyond what I generally see or expect, I am more easily able to reflect that in the grade.

A (100 points): Truly outstanding in form and content. Shows a deep and insightful understanding of the material, assignment goals, and intended audience. Few or no mistakes. Exemplifies an unusually high standard of work. Although there is no rule or curve, because of the amount of effort involved, this grade is rarely earned.

A- (95 points): Excellent in form and content. Shows a deep understanding of the material, assignment goals, and intended audience. Several minor mistakes. Reserved for a very high standard of work.

B+ (90 points): Very good work. Shows a strong understanding of the material, assignment goals, and intended audience. Many minor mistakes or at least one significant issue in form or content. Meets and exceeds the basic expectations for this assignment.

B (85 points): Good work. Shows a good understanding of the material, assignment goals, and intended audience. A few significant issues in form or content. Squarely meets the basic expectations for this assignment.

B- (80 points): Satisfactory work. Shows a good understanding of the material, assignment goals, and intended audience. Several significant issues in form or content. Meets the basic expectations for the assignment.

C+ (75 points): Acceptable work. Shows an adequate understanding of the material, assignment goals, and intended audience. The writing shows promise, but has many significant issues and at least one serious issue in form or content. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss the work.

C (70 points): Acceptable work. Shows an adequate understanding of the material, assignment goals, and intended audience. The writing shows promise, but has several serious issues in form or content. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss the work.

C- (65 points): Marginal work. Shows some understanding of the material, assignment goals, and intended audience. The writing shows promise, but has many serious issues in form or content. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss the work.

D (60 points): Minimally passing work. Shows some understanding of the material, assignment goals, and intended audience. The student receives credit for the work, but the grade is a red flag. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss the work.

F (0 points): Unacceptable work. Student does not receive credit. Assignment is either not turned in or is so lacking as to fail to complete the assignment.

# Course Grading Schema

For your final grade, use this schema to translate your raw percentage into a letter grade:

A: 96.00-100.00%

A-: <96.00-91.00%

B+: <91.00-86.00%

B: <86.00-81.00%

B-: <81.00-76.00%

C+: <76.00-71.00%

C: <71.00-66.00%

C-: <66.00-61.00%

D: <61.00-50.00%

F: <50.00-0.00%

Please note that this schema is only for use in this class. I will submit your final grades in letter form only.

# Reading Drafts

Except for the graded Argumentative Second Draft listed above, **I will not read paper drafts**; however, I will look at a few sentences or a short paragraph if you are concerned about a specific writing issue. You may also present your paper orally and we can talk through your ideas that way.

# Paper Extensions

**You may have an automatic extension of 2 days (48 hours) for any reason on any draft.** I really mean any reason—and you do not have to tell me what your reason is, though you certainly may if you want to. Retroactive extensions are also possible. **I may grant longer extensions or extensions after the deadline, but only if you make an appointment with me on video chat or phone to discuss your request.**I require appointments not to scold you or demand a justification; they are merely a check-in to make sure that you will be able to stay on track for your other assignments and brainstorm how to avoid such requests in the future. Since your classmates will be depending on you to send drafts for peer review, however, **extensions on the first drafts of all papers longer than 2 days will not be granted**. There is no limit on the number of extensions you may request.

# Writing Exercises

To prepare for your short and long papers, you will be required to complete writing exercises on skills such as paraphrasing and writing charitable objections. **Your submissions will be graded on good faith completion, but keep in mind that I may use your submission as an anonymous example, so only submit material you are comfortable sharing with your classmates.**

I strongly encourage you to put real effort into the exercises, even though they are not graded on merit. **They give you practice on the skills you need to produce the specific style of writing I ask for in your papers: academically rigorous but inclusive and public-friendly philosophy.** **This is a style that you may not have been asked to do in a class before, and most students find it quite difficult.** Before I started using the writing exercises, I rarely got more than two or three A level papers for the first paper, through student grades improved over the course of the semester. The writing exercises have typically doubled that number, and I continue to refine them to be as helpful for you as possible.

**Though I have exacting standards for grading your papers, I also make every effort to be transparent about what I am looking for.** The writing exercises help me do that in several ways. First, for each writing exercise, I give you in-depth guidelines for the specific skill it asks you to practice. Second, I will give general feedback on the exercises to the entire class, often including examples you submit. Third, if you want individualized feedback on any writing exercise, you're always encouraged to come to office hours and talk about it.

Finally, I recommend using these exercises as an opportunity to play. Writing is a skill, not a set of rules. While I can give you guidelines and feedback, you need to practice thoughtfully to figure out how to make it work for you**. Like playing piano or pitching a baseball, writing is a creative practice in which the best writers are the ones who develop a style that is distinctively their own.** These writing exercises are a great place both to practice the kind of writing I am asking for in your papers and to figure out what style works for you.

# Writing exercises Rubric

10 points: Satisfactory work. Demonstrates a strong good faith effort to respond to the prompt.

5 points: Acceptable work. Demonstrates a minimally acceptable good faith effort to respond to the prompt.

0 points: Unacceptable work. Assignment is not turned in on time or fails to demonstrate a good faith effort to respond to the prompt.

# Late Assignments

**For each day (24 hours) that a paper you have not requested an extension for is late, your grade for the assignment will go down by a step.** So if a paper receives a grade of a B+ but is one hour late, your grade on that assignment will be bumped down to a B, and if it is 25 hours late, down to a B-.

# Makeup Work

On our Blackboard website, you will find opportunities to make up credit on attendance/participation, reading quizzes, partner discussions, and writing exercises. **I strongly recommend completing makeup work as quickly as possible after you miss something, but you may submit makeup work any time during semester up before Friday, December 3rd at 10pm.** If you want an extension on makeup work at that point, you must make an office hours appointment with me to discuss your plan for finishing work in a timely manner. There is no limit on how much lost credit you may earn back, but no extra credit is available.

# Appealing Grades

If you believe the work you submitted deserves a different grade than it received, you may ask in writing for reconsideration. Your request must be submitted no sooner than 2 days after the assignment grade is returned. Your written request must explain why you believe the work deserves a different grade. Most appeals will not result in a change of grade, but if a change is made please note that the grade may be either higher or lower.

# Office Hours

You can sign up for a Zoom office hours appointment on my booking page, linked from our Blackboard site. **Typically I'll have appointments available Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:30-5:30pm, but I add more as needed if the appointments are filling up.** Click a time slot to make an appointment. **Providing a phone number is optional; only provide that information if you want to receive a text message reminding you of the appointment.** Appointments are in 15 minute increments, but you may sign up for more than one appointment if you expect to need more than 15 minutes. Also, if your schedule doesn't work with my posted available times, don't hesitate to email me an appointment request and give me your availability—my schedule is fairly flexible, so I can usually find a time that works for both of us.

**You may come to office hours for any reason.** Students most commonly come if they have a question about an assignment, a reading, class discussion, or if they want to request an accommodation. But you should also feel free to come and ask me about my philosophical views, raise a point you didn’t get a chance to raise in class, or just come to chat. **Don’t let the fact that this is an online class make you any less likely to come to office hours than you would in person.** While you are not required to make appointments beyond the two required topic meetings, know that students often do better in classes for which they go to office hours. If you do not come to my office hours, **I strongly recommend that you make an effort to go to office hours for at least one of your courses each semester.**

# Email

Feel free to email me at mwilder3@gmu.edu if you have any logistical questions, but **please** **always check first whether the website or other class communications answer your question.**

Some great reasons to email me include:

* you want to set up an appointment to talk with me and there’s not a time my booking page that works for you
* a reading is missing from Blackboard or a page is missing or unreadable
* the online submission link for an assignment is missing or not working
* you believe there is an error on the website or in some communication from me
* you do not understand or are confused about an instruction I’ve given
* you want to request an extension
* you want to alert me that you will not be in class
* you want to ask for an accommodation
* you have feedback on how the class is going for you
* you have a suggestion for how to make the class better generally or specifically for you

**If in doubt, e-mail me. I promise, the worst I’ll do is remind you to look at the website or to make an appointment. If you have a substantive question about philosophy, you will almost always need to come to office hours.** To answer a philosophical question, I typically need to clarify what exactly you are asking and check in with you whether you understand at each point of the explanation, and this back-and-forth is too burdensome for email. **I will do my best to answer all emails within 48 hours, but for example, if you suddenly have a question about an assignment the night before it is due, it is unlikely that I will be able to respond in time.** If I do not respond within 48 hours, please send me a reminder—the oversight is never intentional.

# Texting & Calling

Instead of email, **you may text me or leave a voice message at 240-801-6082.** Note, however, that texts won’t get to me any faster than emails—I have the same notification setup for both. So, you should pick whichever mode of communication is more convenient for you at the time. If you prefer not to video chat, this is also the phone number I'll call from for scheduled phone office hours appointments. **I generally do not answer calls from this number, but if we have an appointment scheduled and I do not call within 5 minutes of the scheduled time, go ahead and call me.**

# Academic Honor Code

You are all bound by the George Mason University Honor Code and have committed to holding yourselves to the standards of academic life. I expect you to uphold both the letter and spirit of the Code. The Honor Code reads as follows: “To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal and/or lie in matters related to academic work.”

The most common form of Code violation is plagiarism. **Plagiarism may be committed unintentionally**—it is easy to forget to cite a source or fail to make a paraphrase quite different enough from the original quote, especially when you feel rushed or otherwise stressed when writing. The only items that do not require citation are your original thoughts or general knowledge. To avoid accidental plagiarism, follow this rule: if you’re not sure whether or not it needs to be cited, cite it. **I strongly encourage you to come to office hours with any questions relating to citation, paraphrasing, collaboration with other students, using work from previous classes, or any other potential Honor Code issues.**

**Please note that I am required to report any case of suspected Honor Code violation to the Honor Committee, which adjudicates such cases.** See honorcode.gmu.edu for more detailed information.

# Accommodations

As noted in other sections, **I am always open to considering accommodations as long as they are compatible with the course goals for any student, regardless of documentation.** In our current circumstances of pandemic and political unrest, I expect to be particularly accommodating, so please do not hesitate to ask. Set up an office hours appointment to email me to request this sort of accommodation.

If you are seeking university-approved accommodations for this course, which may be required for certain kinds of services, visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email:ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474. Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities.

# Selected Campus Resources

* [Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education](https://odime.gmu.edu/)
  + Serves students, cultural organizations, and the Mason community by promoting an environment that fosters and values human understanding and diversity. ODIME seeks to provide services and programs that will instill university-wide appreciation for diverse perspectives and ensure equal levels of inclusion, participation, and retention of underrepresented student groups in their quest for a quality.
  + I aim in this course to provide a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. I welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. Please consider contacting me directly or anonymously to provide feedback on how I am doing in this goal.
  + [GMU Religious Holiday Calendar](https://ulife.gmu.edu/religious-holiday-calendar/): I am happy to accommodate religious holidays with extensions or make-up work. Please email me to request this sort of accommodation.
* [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning Resources](https://lgbtq.gmu.edu/)
  + Promotes the academic success, health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students and their allies. Also works to sustain and strengthen a campus climate of safety, equity, inclusion, and respect in which LGBTQ and ally students can succeed and thrive at Mason.
* [Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS):](http://caps.gmu.edu/) (703) 993-2380
  + Your mental health is just as real and important as your physical health. And just as in the normal course of things several of you will likely benefit from our medical services this semester, so also several of you will likely benefit from our psychiatric services. There is a wide range of services offered, from group to individual care, including care for those who cannot afford normal counseling services. Please take advantage of these as needed to maintain your optimal health.
* [Office of Disability Services](http://ods.gmu.edu/): If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me within the first 2 weeks of the semester and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to ensure you receive the required support: 703-993-2472. All academic accommodations must be arranged through ODS:
* [Keep Learning, Learning Services](http://learningservices.gmu.edu/keeplearning/)
  + Provides a variety of experience based learning opportunities through which students explore a wide range of academic concerns. Services include support to students with learning differences, individual study skills counseling, individualized programs of study, and provision of tutoring resources. Presentations on a variety of academic skill topics are available to the university community. The programs are open to all George Mason University students free of charge. Services are confidential and use of these services does not become part of the student’s academic record.
* [University Libraries](http://library.gmu.edu/)
* [Writing Center](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/)
  + The Writing Center provides one-on-one peer tutoring focused on improving your writing skills (appointment schedule available online). I encourage you to go to the Writing Center at any stage in the writing process, from formulating your ideas to a full draft.
* Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence:
  + Rape and other forms of sexual misconduct are tragically common in our society. **Please note that while I am always happy to speak with students, even about topics as difficult as these, I am also required by federal law to report any indication I receive of sexual misconduct to Georgetown’s Title IX coordinator, including misconduct that happened in the distant past**.
  + George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination, and we are committed to a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. The university encourages students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. [University Policy 1202 Sexual Harassment and Misconduct](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/) (speaks to the specifics of the process, available resources, and the options available to you)
  + Confidential student resources are available on campus at the [Student Support and Advocacy Center](http://ssac.gmu.edu/), [Counseling and Psychological Services](http://caps.gmu.edu/), and [Student Health Services](http://shs.gmu.edu/).
  + All other members of the University community (including me) are not considered confidential resources and are required to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator. For a full list of resources, support opportunities, and reporting options, contact Dr. Jennifer Hammat, Title IX Coordinator, at http://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix, at 703-993-8730, or in the Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics office in the Aquia Building, Suite 373.
* Know your privacy rights under [FERPA](https://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/).
* Check out this [longer list of Mason student support services](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/knowing-mason-students/student-support-resources-on-campus/) posted on The Stearns Center website.

Reading Schedule & Course Calendar

\*\*\*This schedule is subject to change and is included here primarily for students who haven’t yet decided whether to take the course. **Blackboard will always have the most up-to-date schedule under Course Calendar, so you should always look there each week for what you need to do rather than at this document.**

Note the pattern:

* Reading-related assignments (Quizzes, Partner Discussions & Discussion Questions) due on Mondays
* Writing-related assignments (Writing Exercises, Peer Reviews, and Paper Drafts) due on Fridays

All deadlines are at 10pm.

**Expect to work 8-12 hours per week on tasks for this course.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Weeks** | **Topic** | **Tasks & Due Dates** |
| **Week 1**  8/22-8/28 | **Part I: What is Law?**  Introduction | * **Post** in Padlet (under side bar "Post") **by Sunday, 8/22 at 10pm**   + Introduce yourself: Hobby/Activity * **Read**   + Syllabus & Side Bar Links (side bar) * **Complete** Reading Quiz 1: Syllabus & Side Bar (side bar under "Read") **by Sunday, 8/22 at 10pm** * **Attend** 2 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings (side bar under "Attend")   + **Monday 8/23 at 3:00-4:15pm**   + **Wednesday 8/25 at 3:00-4:15pm** * **Complete** Writing Exercise 1: Topic & Concluding Sentences (side bar under "Write") **by Friday, 8/27 at 10pm** * **Sign Up for Course Planning Meeting with Molly**(side bar under "Contact Molly") * Note: All due dates are extra flexible through Friday, 9/3 to allow for start-of-semester chaos. |
| **Week 2**  8/29-9/4 | Natural Law and Legal Positivism | * **Post** in Padlet (under side bar "Post") **by Sunday, 8/29 at 10pm**   + Introduce yourself: Legal Role Model * **Read** (side bar under "Read"**)**   + Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Philosophy of Law, through section 1b only   + Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Natural Law Theory, entire article   + Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Legal Positivism, entire article * **Complete** Reading Quiz 2: Natural Law and Legal Positivism (side bar under "Read")**by Sunday, 8/29 at 10pm** * **Talk** to someone and **submit** your Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions (side bar under Talk") **by Sunday, 8/29 at 10pm** * **Attend** 2 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings (side bar under "Video Chat")   + **Monday 8/30 at 3:00-4:15pm**   + **Wednesday 9/1 at 3:00-4:15pm** * **Complete** Writing Exercise 2: Paraphrase a Quote (side bar under "Write") **by Friday, 9/3 at 10pm** * **Sign Up for Course Planning Meeting with Molly**(side bar under "Contact Molly") **by Friday, 9/3 at 10pm** |
| **Week 3**  9/5-9/11 | Feminist Jurisprudence | * **Read/Watch**   + Patricia Smith, Feminist Jurisprudence (8 pages) * **Complete** Reading Quiz 3: Smith (side bar under "Read") **by Sunday, 9/5 at 10pm** * **Talk** to someone and **submit** your Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions (side bar under Talk") **by Sunday, 9/5 at 10pm** * **Attend** 2 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings (side bar under "Video Chat")   + **Monday 9/6  NO ZOOM CLASS (Labor Day)**   + **Wednesday 9/8 at 3:00-4:15pm** * **Complete** Writing Exercise 3: Explain a Quote (side bar under "Write") **by Friday, 9/10 at 10pm** * **Attend** Course Planning Meeting with Molly (side bar under "Contact Molly") **by Friday, 9/10 at 10pm** |
| **Week 4**  9/12-9/18 | Feminist Critique of Legal Positivism | * **Read/Watch**   + Margot Stubbs, “Feminism and Legal Positivism” (25 pages) * **Complete** Reading Quiz 4: Stubbs **by Sunday, 9/12 at 10pm** * **Talk** to **Round 1 Partner** and submit your Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions **by Sunday, 9/12 at 10pm** * **Attend** 2 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings (side bar under "Video Chat")   + **Monday 9/13 at 3:00-4:15pm**   + **Wednesday 9/15 at 3:00-4:15pm** * **Complete** Writing Exercise 4: Transitions **by Friday, 9/17 at 10pm** * **Write**Interpretive Paper First Draft (side bar under "Write") **by Friday, 9/3 at 10pm** |
| **Week 5**  9/19-9/25 | **Part II: Public Law**  Constitutional Law I | * + **Read/Watch**     - Legal Information Institute: Brown v. Board of Education     - Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas, 347 U.S. 483 (6 pages)     - Derrick Bell, “Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest Convergence Dilemma” (17 pages)   + **Complete** Reading Quiz 5: Bell **by Sunday, 9/19 at 10pm**   + **Talk** to Round 1 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions **by Sunday, 9/19 at 10pm**   + **Attend** 2 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings     - **Monday 9/20 at 3:00-4:15pm**     - **Wednesday 9/22 at 3:00-4:15pm**   + **Complete** Writing Exercise 5: Editing for Clarity **by Friday, 9/24 at 10pm**   + **Peer Review** Interpretive Drafts **by Friday, 9/24 at 10pm** |
| **Week 6**  9/26-10/2 | Constitutional Law II | * + **Read/Watch**     - Christopher David Ruiz Cameron, “How the Garcia Cousins Lost Their Accents: Understanding the Language of Title VII Decisions Approving English-Only Rules as the Product of Racial Dualism, Latino Invisibility, and Legal Indeterminacy” (47 pages)   + **Complete** Reading Quiz 6: Hill and The Social Dilemma **by Sunday, 9/26 at 10pm**   + **Talk** to Round 1 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions **by Sunday, 9/26 at 10pm**   + **Attend** 2 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings     - **Monday 9/27 at 3:00-4:15pm**     - **Wednesday 9/29 at 3:00-4:15pm**   + **Complete** Writing Exercise 6: Interpretive paper guidelines **by Friday, 10/1 at 10pm**   + **Revise and submit**Interpretive Paper Final Draft **by Friday, 10/1 at 10pm** |
| **Week 7**  10/3-10/9 | Criminal Procedure | * **Read**   + Legal Information Institute: Criminal Procedure   + I. Bennett Capers, “Criminal Procedure and the Good Citizen” (59 pages) * **Complete** Reading Quiz 7: Allen **by Sunday, 10/3 at 10pm** * **Talk** to **Round 2 Partner** and submit your Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions **by Sunday, 10/3 at 10pm** * **Attend** 2 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings   + **Monday 10/4 at 3:00-4:15pm**   + **Wednesday 10/6 at 3:00-4:15pm** * **Complete** Writing Exercise 7: Hooking Your Reader **by Friday, 10/8 at 10pm** * **Write** Creative Paper First Draft **by Friday, 10/8 at 10pm** |
| **Week 8**  10/10-10/16 | Criminal Procedure, cont. | * **No new reading**   + Capers, cont. * **Complete** Reading Quiz 8: Review **by Sunday, 10/10 at 10pm** * **Talk** to Round 2 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions **by Sunday, 10/3 at 10pm** * **Attend** 1 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings   + **Tuesday 10/12 at 3:00-4:15pm** * **Complete** Writing Exercise 8: Appeal to Emotion **by Friday, 10/8 at 10pm** * **Peer review** Creative Paper Drafts **by Friday, 10/8 at 10pm** |
| **Week 9**  10/17-10/23 | Criminal Law | * **Read/Watch**   + Legal Information Institute: Criminal Law   + Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Moral Permissibility of Punishment (sections 1-6)   + Helen Coverdale, "Caring and the Prison in Philosophy, Policy and Practice: Under Lock and Key" (14 pages) * **Complete** Reading Quiz 9: Coverdale **by Sunday, 10/17 at 10pm** * **Talk** to Round 2 Partnerand submit your Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions **by Sunday, 10/17 at 10pm** * **Attend** 2 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings   + **Monday 10/18 at 3:00-4:15pm**   + **Wednesday 10/20 at 3:00-4:15pm** * **Complete** Writing Exercise 9: Creative Paper Guidelines **by Friday, 10/22 at 10pm** * **Revise and submit**Creative Paper Final Draft **by Friday, 10/22 at 10pm** |
| **Week 10**  10/24-10/30 | **Part III: Private Law**  Tort Law | * **Read**   + Legal Information Institute: Tort   + Anita Allen, "Natural Law, Slavery, and the Right to Privacy Tort” (29 pages) * **Complete** Reading Quiz 10: Carey **by Sunday, 10/24 at 10pm** * **Talk** to Round 2 Partnerand submit your Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions **by Sunday, 10/24 at 10pm** * **Attend** 2 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings   + **Monday 10/25 at 3:00-4:15pm**   + **Wednesday 10/27 at 3:00-4:15pm** * **Complete** Writing Exercise 10: Introductions **by Friday, 10/29 at 10pm** * **Sign up** for Argumentative Paper Planning Meeting with Molly **by Friday, 10/29 at 10pm** |
| **Week 11**  10/31-11/6 | Property Law | * **Read**   + What is property law?   + Naomi Mezey, “The Paradoxes of Cultural Property” (43 pages) * **Complete** Reading Quiz 11: Mezey **by Sunday, 10/31 at 10pm** * **Talk** to **Round 3 Partner** and submit your Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions **by Sunday, 10/31at 10pm** * **Attend** 2 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings   + **Monday 11/1 at 3:00-4:15pm**   + **Wednesday 11/3 at 3:00-4:15pm** * **Complete** Writing Exercise 10: Objections **by Friday, 11/5 at 10pm** * **Write** Argumentative Paper First Draft **by Friday, 11/5 at 10pm** |
| **Week 12**  11/7-11/13 | Contract Law | * **Read**   + Legal Information Institute: Contract   + Caldwell v. Ins. Co, 52 S.E. 252 (4 pages)   + Bussel v Bishop, 152 Ga. 428 (4 pages)   + Emily M.S. Houh. “Sketches of A Redemptive Theory” (19 pages) * **Complete** Reading Quiz 12: Houh **by Sunday, 11/7 at 10pm** * **Talk** to Round 3 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions **by Sunday, 11/7 at 10pm** * **Attend** 2 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings   + **Monday 11/8 at 3:00-4:15pm**   + **Wednesday 11/10 at 3:00-4:15pm** * **Complete** Writing Exercise 11: Conclusions **by Friday, 11/12 at 10pm** * **Peer review** Argumentative Paper Drafts (side bar under "Write" and then "Argumentative Paper") **by Friday, 11/12 at 10pm** |
| **Week 13**  11/14-11/20 | **Part IV: Professional Ethics of Lawyers**  Defending the Wicked | * **Read**   + David Wilkins, Legal Ethics: Law Stories, “Race, Ethics and the First Amendment" (41 pages) * **Complete** Reading Quiz 13: Wilkins **by Sunday, 11/14 at 10pm** * **Talk** to Round 3 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions **by Monday, 11/14 at 10pm** * **Attend** 2 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings   + **Monday 11/15 at 3:00-4:15pm**   + **Wednesday 11/17 at 3:00-4:15pm** * **Complete** Writing Exercise 12: Argumentative Paper Guidelines **by Friday, 11/19 at 10pm** * **Revise and submit** Argumentative Paper Final Draft **by Friday, 11/19 at 10pm** |
| **Week 14**  11/21-11/27 | Thanksgiving Break | * **NO ZOOM CLASS MEETINGS this week (but your other Monday classes will likely still meet)**   + - **Complete** Reading Quiz 14: Review **by Sunday, 11/21 at 10pm**     - **Complete** Writing Exercise 14: Introductions **by Friday, 11/26 at 10pm** |
| **Week 15**  11/28-12/3 | Client Autonomy | * **Read**   + Michael Mello, Legal Ethics: Law Stories, “United States v Kaczynski: Representing the Unabomber" (34 pages) * **Complete** Reading Quiz 15: Mello **by Sunday, 11/28 at 10pm** * **Talk** to Round 3 Partnerand submit your Partner Discussion & Discussion Questions **by Sunday, 11/28 at 10pm** * **Attend** 2 synchronous Zoom Class Meetings   + **Monday 11/29 at 3:00-4:15pm**   + **Wednesday 12/1 at 3:00-4:15pm** * **Complete** Writing Exercise 13: Arguing not Telling **by Friday, 4/23 at 10pm** * (no paper draft due this week) |
| **Week 16**  12/4-12/10 | Finals | * **Revise and submit** Argumentative Paper Revised Draft by Friday, 12/10 at 10pm |

**\*\*\*ENJOY YOUR WINTER BREAK!\*\*\***