

PHIL 311: PHILOSOPHY OF LAW

George Mason University | Spring 2024 | T/Th 1:30-2:45pm | Innovation Hall 135
INSTRUCTOR: Molly Wilder | EMAIL: mwilder3@gmu.edu | PHONE: 240-801-6082
OFFICE HOURS: sign up for appointment on my booking page

***Note: I only update information on our class Blackboard site—not on this document. So you should always consult our class Blackboard site for updated syllabus information and what tasks you need to complete each week rather than this document.**

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 about 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 your own positions and arguments on the philosophical subject of law improve your ability to defend them in discussion and in writing.
4. 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.

BASIC TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to bring a laptop or tablet with an updated operating system to every class. Access to [MyMason](#) and GMU email are required to participate successfully in this course. Please make sure to update your computer/tablet and prepare yourself to begin using the online format BEFORE the first day of class. Check [the IT Support Center](#) website. Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use the Blackboard learning system, available at <https://mymason.gmu.edu>. Navigate to [the Student Support page](#) for help and information about Blackboard. Once in 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 familiarize yourself with each. Make sure you run a system check a few days before class. If you have difficulty with accessing Blackboard, please contact the ITU Support Center at 703.993.8870 or support@gmu.edu. If you have trouble with using the features in Blackboard, email courses@gmu.edu. Activities and assignments in this course will sometimes use Zoom. In addition to the requirements above, students are required to have a device with a functional camera and microphone. In an emergency, students can connect through a telephone call, but video connection is the expected norm.

MASONLIVE/EMAIL

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Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account. [See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu/>].

RESPONSIBLE USE OF COMPUTING

Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible--use--of--computing/>].

TECHNOLOGY DURING CLASS

You may not have your phone visible during class for any reason. If you need to use your phone, you may step out into the hall at any time. If you are waiting for a call or some sort of notification, like your partner is about to go into labor, keep your phone out of sight and on vibrate in a pocket or similar--then, when you receive the notification, go into the hall to see it or receive the call. If I see your phone during class, I will ask you to put it away or go into the hall to use it. Repeated violations of this policy will result in a lower participation grade.

You are required to bring a laptop or tablet you can type on to each class. I will often ask you to use laptops for various in-class activities. During these activities, I expect you to be looking only at our class Blackboard site, links or documents I have provided, or a notetaking app. If you are in a group and have finished your task, you may not look at other websites or applications. Your options are to keep perfecting your group's response, work ahead or study within our class Blackboard site, or socialize with your group members. If I see you on a non-course-related website or application, I will ask you to navigate back to a related website/application or close your laptop. Repeated violations of this policy will result in a lower participation grade.

During whole class discussions, I will typically ask you to put your laptops away. A great deal of research (for example, [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), and [this](#)) has shown that most students engage more deeply in discussions without a laptop and take better notes by hand than they do on a computer.

Moreover, I have received complaints from students in previous classes that they find classmates' use of laptops distracting. Studies (see above) confirm that sitting near laptop users measurably reduces student learning. Therefore, as the default rule, laptop use is not permitted during whole class discussions.

Still, though they are in the minority, [some students do perform better with the use of a laptop](#). I know this from firsthand experience, and you will see me using a laptop throughout class.

Moreover, I [respect your ability to decide how you learn best](#). In making this decision, however, I ask you to engage in honest self-reflection about what approach will best facilitate both your own learning and the learning experience of those around you. If you are unsure which would be better, err on the side of not using a laptop. If you do come to the considered judgment that you will engage better by using a laptop and are willing to pledge to make every effort not to distract your classmates, please make an appointment or e-mail me to request permission to use your laptop during class discussions.

If you receive permission to use your computer during whole class discussions I expect you to follow these guidelines:

- ensure the sound on your computer is turned off before each class
- avoid having movement or distracting graphics visible on your screen
- consider using a service that limits what you can do on your computer during class time

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- be mindful in how you take notes; remember that typing may encourage bad note-taking habits like writing down everything you hear without thinking about it deeply or failing to engage in discussion because of the time you are taking to edit your notes as you go

As a final note, let me say that I do not mind if you occasionally tune out during class. All of us do so from time to time, and sometimes it can be productive to let your mind wander a bit. My aim is not to police your laptop use to make sure your mind is constantly on class discussion. Just please, please, please, if you must use your laptop to take a mental break during whole group discussion, do so in a way that will not distract your classmates. I recommend having an e-book to read, or an article in stripped down format (no videos, ads, or flashy text). Perhaps you could work on a creative writing project. Just pick something that is text-based and monochrome – the kind of thing that, were your classmate to glance at it, would look like notes or an assigned reading.

STUDENT PRIVACY

All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private to this class; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class. Video recordings -- whether made by instructors or students -- of class meetings that include audio, visual, or textual information from other students are private and must not be shared outside the class. Live video conference meetings (e.g. Collaborate or Zoom) that include audio, textual, or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household or recorded and shared outside the class.

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.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING BREAKDOWN

10% Partner discussions
10% Writing exercises
15% Reading quizzes
15% Participation
20% Midterm exam
30% Final exam

GRADING SCHEMA

A+: 100.01% or higher
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%

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READING QUIZZES

Reading 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.

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. Make sure the answer you provide in fact draws from the page(s) I have directed you to.

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

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. After the first two weeks, I will randomly assign each student a discussion partner to meet with once a week outside of class. You will change partners periodically, such that you will meet with 4 different partners over the course of the semester. I strongly, strongly, strongly recommend that these meetings happen in person or over video chat, but, if necessary, you may instead schedule a discussion over the phone. Before meeting, each student must complete the reading for the week on their own.

You must make a recording of your discussion—ideally a video recording, but an audio recording is also acceptable. Instructions for how to record and submit the video are under "Partner Discussions" in the side bar. 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 and a whole class discussion question. See more detailed instructions under "Partner Discussions" in the side bar. 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 a question for class discussion, you will receive full credit.

Your discussion questions will often inform the structure of whole class discussions. If I select one of your questions, I may ask you to raise the question/comment 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 by 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

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give you permission to do an alternative assignment. If you do not complete these steps, partner discussions completed without your assigned partner will not receive credit.

PARTNER DISCUSSION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS RUBRIC

10 points: Good work. Includes all required elements: complete access information for a 30-minute recording of discussion relating to the weekly readings with their assigned partner and 1 whole class discussion question.

5 points: Acceptable work. Includes some 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 the midterm and final exams, you will be required to complete writing exercises on skills such as paraphrasing quotes 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 will ask you to recognize and produce on your midterm and final exams: 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 many students find it quite difficult.

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

Your participation has multiple components: participation in whole class discussion, graded team quests, your teammates' evaluation of your contributions to your team, and miscellaneous participation opportunities. (If you're interested, the team elements are inspired by the team-based learning movement, though I do not follow the exact structure.) At least once during the semester, I will provide a preliminary participation grade and anonymized feedback from your teammates so that you can gauge how you are doing.

PARTICIPATION IN WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION

Satisfactory participation includes:

- participating voluntarily in class discussion or approved participation alternative at least 2 times each week
- consistently having your discussion questions/comments 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

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- 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:

- not participating voluntarily in class discussion or approved participation alternative at least 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

PARTICIPATION IN WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION RUBRIC

60/50 points (10 points extra credit): Consistently excellent participation

50/50 points: Consistently satisfactory participation and occasional excellent participation

30/50 points: Consistently satisfactory participation and occasional unsatisfactory participation

0/50 points: Consistently unsatisfactory participation

GRADED TEAM QUESTS

'Teams' are groups of 5-7 students you will work with over the course of the semester on in-class activities I call 'quests', often with some competitive element. For example, I will regularly ask teams to choose the best reading quiz answer out of four provided options. For that type of quest-one with a multiple-choice right answer--each team member on a team that chooses the right answer earns credit towards their Participation grade.

GRADED TEAM QUESTS RUBRIC

5/5 points: best answer

0/5 points: other answers or team member is absent

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There will also be many non-multiple-choice quests, like asking teams to come up with the best definition of ethics according to Aristotle in 50 or fewer words. As I will be judging those quests more subjectively, I will often provide a surprise reward, such as the chance to choose our whole class discussion topic or small amounts of extra credit, as an incentive.

TEAM PARTICIPATION

After we have completed all team activities for the day, I will ask everyone to rate their teammates based on the following suggested rubric:

Excellent - went above and beyond in:

- active listening and helpful questions as well as for more direct contributions
- gently encouraging the team to stay on task
- gently encouraging quieter members to contribute
- showing courage by speaking even when they are not confident in their point
- keeping track of other team members' contributions or helping synthesize others' contributions
- recognizing useful arguments that may cause harm to other teammates and taking pains to minimize that harm
- making specific and relevant references to the readings

Good - made helpful contributions and did not affect team work negatively

Satisfactory - made helpful contributions, but occasionally affected team work negatively by, for example:

- being late to start team activity
- distracting teammates from task
- monopolizing discussion time to the detriment of teammates
- speaking in a way that is intentionally harmful to teammates or failing to apologize for unintended harm

Unsatisfactory - was absent, made no contributions, or significantly affected team work negatively

I will determine your team participation grade based on both your teammates ratings/comments as well as my own observation of you during team activities.

TEAM PARTICIPATION RUBRIC

60/50 points (10 points extra credit): Consistently excellent team participation

50/50 points: Consistently good team participation

30/50 points: Consistently satisfactory team participation

0/50 points: Consistently unsatisfactory team participation

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*Note: This course is structured around robust in-class discussion and collaborative decision-making, whole class and in teams. If you are the type of student who greatly dislikes speaking in a classroom or working collaboratively, for whatever reason, this may not be the best class for you.

MISCELLANEOUS PARTICIPATION ASSIGNMENTS/EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES

Finally, your participation grade also includes miscellaneous participation assignments, such as posting on the introductory padlets or completing the individual strengths survey. These will be graded as 5/5 points (complete) or 0/5 points (incomplete).

I will also occasionally offer participation extra credit opportunities, such as 5 extra credit points applied to your participation grade for attending a specific philosophy department event.

MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS

Your midterm and final exams will be in person, on your laptop, and you will not be able to use any notes, class readings, or other materials. You will be required to install Respondus Lockdown Browser to use for exams (instructions available on Blackboard).

Exam questions will all be based on reading quiz questions, writing exercises, and in-class team quest questions. At least a week before each exam, I will provide you with a pool of possible exam questions to study from.

ATTENDANCE

If you know in advance that you will miss a class 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, missing class or coming late will typically lower your in-class participation grade. To some extent you can make up that participation by being extra-engaged in the classes you are there for, but more than 2 or 3 absences will almost certainly bring your grade down. Under Makeup Work in the side bar, you'll see that I recommend that after 2 absences, you turn in a 30-minute make-up discussion video for each class you miss.

Beyond grade considerations, if you miss a class meeting, you miss out on many of the benefits of team and whole class discussion. I recommend asking a classmate (or better yet, two) for notes. Since my role in class 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. After you have looked over a classmate's notes and posted in-class activities, however, I am happy to answer any questions you might have about content.

Note: Absences in the first week of class or before you join the course will not be considered in your participation grade.

CONTENT WARNINGS

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In this course, we will discuss issues that some students may find challenging or personally harmful to talk about, including violence related to sex, race, and disability. If those or similar topics are ones 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 in your discussion questions. I will not cold call you on a topic unless have already voluntarily raised the topic in a discussion question or in class discussion. 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. 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, leave the room 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.

MAKEUP WORK

On our Blackboard website, you will find opportunities to make up credit on late or missed 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 until finals week (exact date on Blackboard). If you want an extension on makeup work at that point, you must contact 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 through make up assignments.

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

Tentatively I'm planning to have Zoom appointments available Fridays 3-4pm and in-person appointments Tuesdays 4:30-5:30pm, but that may change as I adjust my schedule in the first few weeks, and I will also add more as needed if the appointments are filling up. You can sign up for an individual Zoom/phone or in-person office hours appointments on my booking page: <https://10to8.com/book/ieqyfnihyoqfmibozn/>

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. If you make an appointment with me, you should always get a confirmation email. If you do not get a confirmation within 24 hours, please email or text me to make sure your appointment went through. Also, if your schedule doesn't work with my posted available times, don't hesitate to

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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 will use the same Zoom Link for all office hours appointments:

<https://gmu.zoom.us/j/95193666954?pwd=M09oTUY0aXVVK24rUHJibUxEWnVFQT09>.

The password is: philosophy. If you remain in the waiting room for more than 5 minutes without hearing from me, email or text me to confirm your appointment.

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. While you are not required to come to office hours beyond the two required topic meetings, know that students often do better in classes for which they go to office hours. Even 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

Your default method of contacting me is to email me at mwilder3@gmu.edu.

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 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

I will greatly appreciate it if you check first whether the answer to your question is on this website, but if in doubt, e-mail me. I promise the worst I'll do is remind you to look at some part of the website or to make an appointment. If you have a substantive question about philosophy, you will almost always need to come to an office hours appointment or stay late after class. 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 that happens, you may need to ask for an extension. If I do not respond within 48 hours, please email or text me a gentle reminder—the oversight is never intentional.

TEXTING & CALLING

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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 may pick whichever mode of communication is more convenient for you at the time. If you prefer not to video chat or are having technical difficulties with Zoom, 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.

MASK POLICY

Masks are encouraged, but not required, for anyone exhibiting respiratory symptoms (e.g. coughing or sneezing). I also generally recommend the wearing of masks when you are returning from travel, when you have recently attended a particularly crowded indoor event, when you expect to interact with the elderly or immunocompromised individuals in the near future, and if the incidence of flu/COVID rises significantly--as it may well do as winter approaches. Please respect your classmates' decisions to wear or not wear masks in class.

CLASS ADJUSTMENT POLICY

If the campus closes, or if a class meeting needs to be adjusted due to weather, pandemic, or other concern, I will email and post an announcement on Blackboard, so make sure you regularly check your email in such situations. Typically, we will have our class meeting synchronously over Zoom if we cannot meet in person. The link for a Zoom class in such an event is under Zoom Links in the side bar.

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.

A note on Chat GPT: You may use ChatGPT (or similar AI text generator) on class assignments, but do so with caution. I have intentionally picked assignments and prompts that are likely to be difficult for ChatGPT to handle well, and even those that it does handle reasonably well, the

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ChatGPT version by itself is unlikely to earn exemplary grades. If you do decide to use ChatGPT on any assignment, I strongly encourage you to make your own stab at the assignment first, then run it through ChatGPT to see if there is anything you think is better in the ChatGPT version and edit accordingly. If you instead start with the ChatGPT version, you make it harder for yourself to come up with original work. There is also well-regarded research showing that you learn better if you attempt a task before looking at an exemplar, even if you do badly on your attempt. So my appeal here is to your sense of self-interest rather than your honor—I am not interested in policing your use of ChatGPT; however, I can guarantee that the knowledge and skills you take away from this class will be much less if you use it as a writing crutch or as substitute for your own judgment.

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.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

It is essential to recognize the fundamental value of diversity. In this course, we recognize the morally heinous effects of the fraught history of immiseration that has traumatized members of marginalized groups. Here, we welcome and celebrate individual difference. This includes—but is not limited to—recognition of differences of race, ethnicity, religious belief, gender expression, indigenous and first nation status, socio-economic status, age, and ability. In concrete terms, this means that we respect the views of others, refrain from behaviors that might stymie the expression of others, or otherwise diminish the quality of the lived experience of those with whom we share this space of learning.

COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION AND ANTI-RACISM

As members of the George Mason University community, we all play an integral role in building an educational environment that is committed to anti-racism and inclusive excellence. An anti-racist approach to higher education acknowledges the ways that individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural manifestations of racism against Black individuals and other people of color contribute to inequality and injustice in our classrooms, on our campuses, and in our communities, and it strives to provide our community members with resources to interrupt cycles of racism so as to cultivate a more equitable, inclusive, and just environment for all of our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends, regardless of racial background.

To be anti-racist means:

To make constant, conscious decisions to interrupt racism and cultivate equity, inclusion, and justice for people of all racial backgrounds, and in particular those from Black communities and

other communities of color, who are most likely to bear the direct and indirect costs of systems of white supremacy;

- To interrogate histories of white supremacy and white-dominant culture, and to examine the ways in which these histories have impacted our individual beliefs, our interpersonal relationships, our institutional and structural policies and processes, and our entire society;
- To make a commitment to being responsible for our own relationships to, and actions within, systems of white supremacy; and
- To cultivate a practice of self-awareness and self-reflection that allows us to critically evaluate our own role in upholding white supremacy and identify the ways we can interrupt cycles of racism at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels.

We believe that the work of anti-racism starts with each individual, and that in cultivating an anti-racist approach to research, scholarship, and practice, our students will build a skillset rooted in principles of equity, inclusion, and justice that they will carry with them throughout their lives.*

*Commitment statement prepared by Dr. Charles Chavis, Assistant Professor in the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School of Peace and Conflict Resolution.

SELECTED CAMPUS RESOURCES (LINKS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD CLASS SITE)

- Center of Culture, Equity, and Empowerment (CCEE)
 - The Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment is committed to eradicating oppression in all its forms and in collaboration with University colleagues and stakeholders to co-create an equitable campus climate and society, by providing intersectional programs, services, and support that elevates consciousness rooted in culture, healing and liberation.
 - GMU Religious Holiday Calendar: I am happy to accommodate religious holidays--see "Makeup Work" in the side bar for my standard options, or email me if you want to request something different.
- LGBTQ+ Resources Center
 - The LGBTQ+ Resources Center cultivates the success and well-being of queer, trans, non-binary, and questioning students, staff, and faculty. Our work is deeply collaborative and rooted in intersectional justice. We build identity-affirming programs, develop leaders, provide critical resources, and foster a culture of equity and allyship, at Mason.
- Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS): (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 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: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me within the first two weeks of the semester and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to ensure you receive the required

support: 703-993-2472. All official academic accommodations must be arranged through ODS. Note, however, that I am happy to provide informal accommodations in this specific course, though I encourage you to get documentation in any case, as you may benefit from it in the future.

- Keep Learning, Learning Services
 - Learning Services 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.
- Student Emergency Assistance Funding : Emergency funding is available to students who experience unexpected financial situations and meet certain eligibility criteria.
- University Libraries: Mason Libraries offers a multitude of online and on site services for you. You can access eBooks, databases, tutorials, and more via <https://library.gmu.edu/faq-page>.
- Writing Center
 - The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>]. You can now sign up for an Online Writing Lab (OWL) session just like you sign up for a face-to-face session in the Writing Center, which means YOU set the date and time of the appointment! Learn more about the Online Writing Lab (OWL).
- 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 George Mason'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 (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, Counseling and Psychological Services, and Student Health Services.
 - 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

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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.
- Check out the list of Mason student support services posted on The Stearns Center website.

READING SCHEDULE & COURSE CALENDAR

- Note the pattern:
 - Reading Quizzes and Partner Discussions are due on Sundays
 - Writing Exercises are due on Thursdays
- All deadlines are at 10pm.
- Expect to work 6-8 hours per week on tasks for this course.
- You are required to bring a laptop computer or tablet that you can type on to every in-person class.
- I reserve the right to revise this schedule as needed—changes will be reflected on our Blackboard site.

Weeks	Topic	Tasks & Due Dates
<p>Week 1</p> <p>1/14-1/20</p>	<p>Part I: What is Law</p> <p><i>Introduction</i></p>	<p>Find all links and materials in Weekly Content in the side bar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post in Padlet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Introduce yourself: Hobby/Activity</i> • Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Side bar links, with special focus on Syllabus Information and Contact Molly ○ Elisabeth Barnes, Arguments That Harm (5 pages) (you'll have time in class on Tuesday to read this) ○ Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Philosophy of Law, through section 1b only (~6 pages) • Complete <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading Quiz 1: Course information ○ Individual Strengths Survey • Attend in-person class meetings (Innovation Hall 135) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tuesday 1/16 at 1:30-2:45pm ○ Thursday 1/18 at 1:30-2:45pm • Complete Writing Exercise 1: Logical Fallacies by Thursday, 1/18 at 10pm

<p>Week 2 1/21-1/27</p>	<p><i>Natural Law, Legal Positivism, and Feminist Jurisprudence</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post in Padlet by Sunday, 1/21 at 10pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Introduce yourself: Hobby/Activity (if not completed last week)</i> ○ <i>Introduce yourself: Legal Role Model</i> • Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Natural Law Theory, entire article (~13 pages) ○ Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Legal Positivism, entire article (~16 pages) ○ Patricia Smith, Feminist Jurisprudence (8 pages) • Complete by Sunday, 1/21 at 10pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading Quiz 1: Syllabus & Side Bar (if not completed last week) ○ Individual Strengths Survey if not completed last week) ○ Reading Quiz 2: IEP articles & Smith • Attend in-person class meetings (Innovation Hall 135) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tuesday 1/23 at 1:30-2:45pm ○ Thursday 1/25 at 1:30-2:45pm • Complete Writing Exercise 2: Paraphrase a Quote (Smith) by Thursday, 1/25 at 10pm
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<p>Week 3</p> <p>1/28-2/3</p>	<p><i>Feminist Critique of Legal Positivism</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post in Padlet by Sunday, 1/28 at 10pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>At least one comment on a classmate's post in the Introduce yourself: Hobby/Activity padlet</i> • Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Margot Stubbs, “Feminism and Legal Positivism” (25 pages -- this is the densest and hardest piece of the semester, so give yourself plenty of time to read it) • Complete by Sunday, 1/28 at 10pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Reading Quiz 3: Stubbs • Talk to Round 1 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion by Sunday, 1/28 at 10pm • Attend in-person class meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Tuesday 1/30 at 1:30-2:45pm (<i>Last day to drop with full refund</i>) ◦ Thursday 2/1 at 1:30-2:45pm • Complete Writing Exercise 3: Construct an Example (Stubbs) by Thursday, 2/1 at 10pm
<p>Week 4</p> <p>2/4-2/10</p>	<p>Part II: Public Law <i>Constitutional Law I</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post in Padlet by Sunday, 2/4 at 10pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>At least one comment on a classmate's post in the Introduce yourself: Legal Role Model padlet</i> • Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Legal Information Institute: Brown v. Board of Education ◦ Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas, 347 U.S. 483 (6 pages) ◦ Wikipedia - Derrick Bell ◦ Derrick Bell, “Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest Convergence Dilemma” (17 pages) • Complete Reading Quiz 4: Bell by Sunday, 2/4 at 10pm • Talk to Round 1 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion by Sunday, 2/4 at 10pm • Attend in-person class meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Tuesday 2/6 at 1:30-2:45pm ◦ Thursday 2/8 at 1:30-2:45pm • Complete Writing Exercise 4: Logical Fallacies (2) by Thursday, 2/8 at 10pm

<p>Week 5 2/11-2/17</p>	<p><i>Constitutional Law II</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Faculty Profile: Christopher David Ruiz Cameron ○ 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 5: Cameron by Sunday, 2/11 at 10pm • Talk to Round 1 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion & Discussion Starters by Sunday, 2/11 at 10pm • Attend in-person class meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tuesday 2/13 at 1:30-2:45pm ○ Thursday 2/15 at 1:30-2:45pm • Complete Writing Exercise 5: Paraphrase a Quote (Cameron) by Thursday, 2/15 at 10pm
<p>Week 6 2/18-2/24</p>	<p><i>Criminal Law</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legal Information Institute: Criminal Law ○ Legal Information Institute: Criminal Procedure ○ Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Moral Permissibility of Punishment, entire article (~25 pages) ○ Helen Coverdale, "Caring and the Prison in Philosophy, Policy and Practice: Under Lock and Key" (14 pages) • Complete Reading Quiz 6: Coverdale by Sunday, 2/18 at 10pm • Talk to Round 2 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion Starters by Sunday, 2/18 at 10pm • Attend in-person class meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tuesday 2/20 at 1:30-2:45pm ○ Thursday 2/22 at 1:30-2:45pm • Complete Writing Exercise 6: Raise an Objection (Coverdale) by Thursday, 2/22 at 10pm

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<p>Week 7</p> <p>2/25-3/2</p>	<p><i>Review and Midterm Exam</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Midterm Exam Guide • Complete Reading Quiz 7: Midterm Review by Sunday, 2/25 at 10pm • Talk to Round 2 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion by Sunday, 2/25 at 10pm • Attend in-person class meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Tuesday 2/27 at 1:30-2:45pm ◦ Thursday 2/29 at 1:30-2:45pm
<p>Week 8</p> <p>3/3-3/9</p>	<p>SPRING BREAK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No assignments this week, but note that the Week 9 reading (Capers) is the longest of the semester, so I recommend getting an early start on it. Also, remember that you still have your regular reading quiz and partner discussion due the Sunday at the end of break
<p>Week 9</p> <p>3/10-3/16</p>	<p><i>Criminal Procedure</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Legal Information Institute: Criminal Procedure ◦ Faculty Profile: Bennett Capers ◦ I. Bennett Capers, “Criminal Procedure and the Good Citizen” (59 pages) • Complete Reading Quiz 9: Capers by Sunday, 3/10 at 10pm • Talk to Round 2 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion by Sunday, 3/10 at 10pm • Attend in-person class meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Tuesday 3/12 at 1:30-2:45pm ◦ Thursday 3/14 at 1:30-2:45pm • Complete Writing Exercise 9: Construct an Example (Capers) by Thursday, 3/14 at 10pm

<p>Week 10</p> <p>3/17-3/23</p>	<p>Part III: Private Law</p> <p><i>Tort Law</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legal Information Institute: Tort ○ Faculty Profile: Anita Allen ○ Anita Allen, "Natural Law, Slavery, and the Right to Privacy Tort" (29 pages) • Complete Reading Quiz 10: Allen by Sunday, 3/17 at 10pm • Talk to Round 3 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion by Sunday, 3/17 at 10pm • Attend in-person class meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tuesday 3/19 at 1:30-2:45pm ○ Thursday 3/21 at 1:30-2:45pm • Complete Writing Exercise 10: Raise an Objection (Allen) by Thursday, 3/21 at 10pm
<p>Week 11</p> <p>3/24-3/30</p>	<p><i>Property Law</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is property law? ○ Faculty Profile: Naomi Mezey ○ Naomi Mezey, "The Paradoxes of Cultural Property" (43 pages) • Complete Reading Quiz 11: Mezey by Sunday, 3/24 at 10pm • Talk to Round 3 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion by Sunday, 3/24 at 10pm • Attend in-person class meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tuesday 3/26 at 1:30-2:45pm ○ Thursday 3/28 at 1:30-2:45pm • Complete Writing Exercise 11: Paraphrase a Quote (Mezey) by Thursday, 3/28 at 10pm

<p>Week 12</p> <p>3/31-4/6</p>	<p><i>Contract Law</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legal Information Institute: Contract ○ Caldwell v. Ins. Co, 52 S.E. 252 (4 pages) ○ Bussel v Bishop, 152 Ga. 428 (4 pages) ○ Faculty Profile: Emily M.S. Houh ○ Emily M.S. Houh, “Sketches of A Redemptive Theory” (19 pages) • Complete Reading Quiz 12: Houh by Sunday, 3/31 at 10pm • Talk to Round 3 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion by Sunday, 3/31 at 10pm • Attend in-person class meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tuesday 4/2 at 1:30-2:45pm ○ Thursday 4/4 at 1:30-2:45pm • Complete Writing Exercise 12: Logical Fallacies (3) by Thursday, 4/4 at 10pm
<p>Week 13</p> <p>4/7-4/13</p>	<p>Part IV: Professional Ethics of Lawyers</p> <p><i>Client Autonomy</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Michael Mello, Legal Ethics: Law Stories, “United States v Kaczynski: Representing the Unabomber” (34 pages) • Talk to Round 4 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion by Sunday, 4/7 at 10pm • Complete Reading Quiz 13: Mello by Sunday, 4/7 at 10pm • Attend in-person class meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tuesday 4/9 at 1:30-2:45pm ○ Thursday 4/11 at 1:30-2:45pm
<p>Week 14</p> <p>4/14-4/20</p>	<p><i>Defending the Wicked</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Faculty Profile: David Wilkins ○ David Wilkins, Legal Ethics: Law Stories, “Race, Ethics and the First Amendment” (41 pages) • Talk to Round 4 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion by Sunday, 4/14 at 10pm • Complete Reading Quiz 14: Wilkins • review by Sunday, 4/14 at 10pm • Attend in-person class meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tuesday 4/16 at 1:30-2:45pm ○ Thursday 4/18 at 1:30-2:45pm

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<p>Week 15</p> <p>4/21-4/27</p>	<p><i>Review & Wrap-up</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Final Exam Review Guide • Talk to Round 4 Partner and submit your Partner Discussion by Sunday, 4/21 at 10pm • Complete Reading Quiz 15: Review by Sunday, 4/21 at 10pm • Attend in-person class meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tuesday 4/23 at 1:30-2:45pm ○ Thursday 4/25 at 1:30-2:45pm
<p>Weeks 16/17</p> <p>4/28-5/11</p>	<p><i>Final Exam</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Final Exam <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Final Exam Locator