

Course Proposal for Spring Semester 2017



Law, Culture, and Community

This course considers how law constructs meaning from the world around us. The course explores not only *what* law is, but *why* law is, and *where* law shows up in American public and private life. We will explore the roles of law in facilitating cooperation and resolving conflict with an interdisciplinary lens of history, philosophy, religious studies, political, and legal theory.

We will begin with background information on the evolution of Western legal theory from the time of the Ancient Greeks to current American legal theory. We will study the work of many salient legal and political theorists, including Socrates, Thomas Hobbes, Abraham Lincoln, and Jeremy Waldron. We will then examine the structure of the American legal system, from the passage of city ordinances to the appointment of judges. Throughout the course, we will analyze passages from poets, musicians, legal theorists, court cases, and relevant news articles to try to gain an understanding of how the role of law is viewed in society.



While emphasis is on the American legal experience, we will consider the comparative and global context as well. Legal theorists look to the laws of other countries to better understand their own systems and to seek novel solutions to complex legal issues. We will examine some of their studies and will focus in particular on the area of comparative juvenile law.

