LEGAL STUDIES

The Legal Studies program promotes the interdisciplinary study of law, legal institutions, and legal processes from social science and humanities perspectives. It is not a “prelaw” program; instead, it examines how legal institutions, actors, and processes fit within a broader social context. In this conception, the law is a social institution that warrants study in its own right and provides an excellent lens through which students may critically examine a variety of themes central to other disciplines (such as race and ethnicity, class, gender, inequality, social change, governance, politics, and culture). The program also prepares students to conduct empirical research and theoretical inquiries across a broad range of contemporary and historical subjects that implicate law.

Programs of Study

- Legal Studies Major (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/legal-studies/legal-studies-major)
- Legal Studies Minor (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/legal-studies/legal-studies-minor)

LEGAL_ST 101-6 First-Year Seminar (1 Unit) Open to first-year students in Weinberg College; can satisfy at most 1 credit towards major or minor requirements in Legal Studies. WCAS First-Year Seminar

LEGAL_ST 206-0 Law and Society (1 Unit) Introduction to the role of law in American society. Relationship of law, inequality, and social change. Changes in legal institutions: the courts, the legal profession, and legal services for the poor. Taught with SOCIOL 206-0; may not receive credit for both courses. Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area

LEGAL_ST 207-0 Legal Studies Research Methods (1 Unit) Introduction to research methodologies used in interdisciplinary legal studies, including jurisprudence and legal reasoning, qualitative and quantitative social science methods, and historical and textual analysis. LEGAL_ST 207-0 and SOCIOL 227-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. Prerequisite: LEGAL_ST 207-0. Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area

LEGAL_ST 276-0 Introductory Topics in Legal Studies (1 Unit) May be repeated for credit with different topics.

LEGAL_ST 305-0 American Immigration (1 Unit) Themes in history of immigration, especially from Europe, Latin America, and Asia. Law, racial formation, acculturation, transnational and international contexts, competing notions of citizenship. HISTORY 305-0 and LEGAL_ST 305-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. Historical Studies Distro Area

LEGAL_ST 308-0 Sociology of Law (1 Unit) Sociological analysis of legal institutions such as courts, the police, and lawyers. Law, inequality, and social change. Taught with SOCIOL 318-0; may not receive credit for both courses. Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area

LEGAL_ST 309-0 Political Theories of the Rule of Law (1 Unit) Key documents and debates in the development of theories of law and jurisprudence. From Aeschylus to contemporary democratic and legal theories and major court cases on topics ranging from torture to Title IX.

LEGAL_ST 318-1 Legal and Constitutional History of the United States (1 Unit) Colonial period - 1850. Development of legal institutions, constitutionalism, law and social change, law and economic development. Taught with HISTORY 318-1; may not receive credit for both courses. Historical Studies Distro Area

LEGAL_ST 318-2 Legal and Constitutional History of the United States: Since 1850 (1 Unit) 1850 - present. Law in industrial society; administration, race relations, corporations, environmental protection, civil liberties. Taught with HISTORY 318-2; may not receive credit for both courses. Historical Studies Distro Area

LEGAL_ST 330-0 U.S. Refugee Policy & Localities (1 Unit) Comparative understandings of refugee policies in liberal democracies and their relation to constitutional and human rights. Street level bureaucracy, constitutional governance, federalism, integration, refugee resettlement policy, citizenship and belonging. POLSCI 330-0 and LEGAL_ST 330-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area

LEGAL_ST 333-0 Constitutional Law II (1 Unit) Consideration of US Supreme Court decisions dealing with civil and political rights, including equality, freedom of speech and religion, and criminal procedures. LEGAL_ST 333-0 and POLSCI 333-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. Prerequisite: POLSCI 220-0 or POLSCI 230-0. Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area

LEGAL_ST 340-0 Gender and the Law (1 Unit) Examination of the changing role of law in governing gender and sexual relations in America. Legal definitions of gender and sexuality in the household, the workplace, and the state. GNDR_ST 340-0 and LEGAL_ST 340-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext) Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area

LEGAL_ST 342-0 International Organizations (1 Unit) Institutions that govern the interactions of states, including the WTO, UN, ICC, and ICC; informal norms, such as international intervention, international criminal law, and sovereignty. POLSCI 342-0 and LEGAL_ST 342-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. Prerequisite: POLSCI 240-0 or consent of instructor. Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area

LEGAL_ST 347-0 Comparative Race & Ethnicity (1 Unit) Comparative history of Latinos, Asian Americans, African Americans, and white ethnics in the 20th century United States; role of law, politics, and society in shaping and being shaped by racial and ethnic categories. Historical Studies Distro Area

LEGAL_ST 348-0 Race, Politics, and the Law (1 Unit) Current role of race and racism from multiple disciplinary perspectives. Application to contemporary legal and political issues. How law deals with racial inequality. LEGAL_ST 348-0 and SOCIOL 348-0 are taught together;
may not receive credit for both courses. Prerequisite: LEGAL_ST 206-0, SOCIOL 206-0, SOCIOL 208-0, LEGAL_ST 308-0, or SOCIOL 318-0. 

LEGAL_ST 350-0 Psychology and the Law (1 Unit)  Examines the application of psychology to law, including topics such as the insanity defense, criminal profiling, eyewitness testimony, and interrogation. Taught with PSYCH 340-0; may not receive credit for both courses. Prerequisite: PSYCH 110-0.

LEGAL_ST 356-0 Constitutional Challenges in Comparative Perspective (1 Unit)  Constitutional controversies and resolutions in liberal democracies. Constitutional traditions and governance, rule of law, legitimacy and authority in diverse societies, human rights, social transformation. POLI_SCI 356-0 and LEGAL_ST 356-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses.

LEGAL_ST 376-0 Topics in Legal Studies (1 Unit)  May be repeated for credit with different topics.

LEGAL_ST 381-0 Children and the Law (1 Unit)  Examines from a developmental perspective research on children's involvement in the legal system as decision makers, witnesses, victims, and perpetrators. Taught with PSYCH 381-0; may not receive credit for both courses. Prerequisites: PSYCH 205-0, PSYCH 218-0.

LEGAL_ST 398-1 Advanced Research Seminar 1 (1 Unit)  Exposure to theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of law and legal institutions in society; preparation of original thesis. Consecutive enrollment required in LEGAL_ST 398-2. Prerequisites: LEGAL_ST 207-0 and acceptance to program as major.

LEGAL_ST 398-2 Advanced Research Seminar 2 (1 Unit)  Preparation and presentation of original thesis. Prerequisite: LEGAL_ST 398-1 within the same academic year.

LEGAL_ST 399-0 Independent Study (1 Unit)  Readings and conferences on special subjects for students pursuing a specific area of interest in legal studies.