

Law and Society

Interdisciplinary

Kenyon's Law and Society Concentration is an acknowledgment of the increasing importance within the best liberal arts institutions of programs that emphasize the study of law, legal institutions, and the legal profession. This program is designed to provide students with a comprehensive, coherent curricular structure within which to examine a plethora of law-related issues that emerge across disciplines and for which these various disciplines seek, if not to find the correct answers about law, to ask appropriate questions.

Students pursuing this area of study will ponder the relationship between law and human behavior and the role of law in society. They will focus their work in three primary areas: philosophies of law, law as a social institution, and law and government.

FACULTY

Abbie Erler, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Director

Jeffrey Bowman, Associate Professor of History

Allison L. Hurst, Visiting Assistant Professor of Legal Studies and Sociology

Jennifer Johnson, Assistant Professor of Sociology

Marla H. Kohlman, Associate Professor of Sociology

Ric S. Sheffield, Associate Provost; Associate Professor of Sociology and Legal Studies

William Suarez-Potts, Assistant Professor of History

Yang Xiao, Assistant Professor of Philosophy

Those faculty members who teach courses approved for credit in the Law and Society Concentration constitute the program's extended faculty. Consult the director for a list.

THE CURRICULUM

Students will begin their exploration of law in society with the Introduction to Legal Studies and conclude it with a Senior Seminar in Legal Studies, which will encompass a directed research project within a selected theme or topic.

Introduction to Legal Studies is a survey course that attempts to expose students to a variety of disciplinary approaches to the study of law and legal phenomena. It is intended ordinarily for students who have attained at least sophomore standing and have had some exposure to the social sciences, usually through an introductory course. The Senior Seminar in Legal Studies is open to juniors and seniors who have taken Introduction to Legal Studies and at least two other courses counting toward fulfillment of the concentration requirements (or to students with permission of the director).

CONCENTRATION REQUIREMENTS

The Law and Society Concentration requires students to complete 2.5 units of specified “law and society” coursework. These units comprise the following: Introduction to Legal Studies (LGLS 110, .5 unit); a semester’s work in a philosophy-of-law subject area (philosophy, political science, or history offerings, .5 unit); two courses in two different departments examining law as a social institution (1 unit); and the Senior Seminar in Legal Studies (.5 unit).

LAW AND SOCIETY COURSES

LGLS 110. Introduction to Legal Studies

Credit: .5 unit

This course examines the law, legal profession, and legal institutions from a variety of traditional social-science perspectives. The primary frame of reference will be sociological and social psychological. The objective of the course is to expose students to a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives on law and to encourage the examination of law-related phenomena through the literature of multiple disciplines. Topics to be covered include law as a social institution; law as a social-control mechanism; a history of law in the United States; the U.S. criminal justice system; philosophies of law; law and psychology; comparative legal cultures; and law and social change. This survey course is intended to encourage and facilitate a critical study of law in society and serve as a foundation from which to pursue the study of law and legal issues in other curricular offerings. This course is required for those students who intend to complete a Law and Society Concentration. This course may also serve as a foundation course in sociology.

Instructor: Staff

LGLS 220. Media and the Law

Credit: .5 unit

This lecture and discussion course will introduce students to the law, legal profession, and legal systems as they are portrayed, presented, affected, and utilized by the media. The primary frames of reference from which to examine both issues and legal phenomena will be sociological and social psychological. Students will examine the significant role that the media play in the American justice system as well as the critical legal issues that the media face in pursuing their craft. Central to the foundation of this course is an exploration of the meaning of the speech and press clauses of the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Topics to be explored include government censorship, libel, invasion of privacy, obscenity and pornography, the impact of press coverage upon the right to a fair trial, and hate speech. A portion of this course will focus on understanding the role of the media in relation to crime and criminal justice, particularly through the advent of new technologies. Another segment will examine the public’s perception of law and justice in popular culture, using examples in literature, film, and television. Prerequisites: sophomore standing or higher.

Instructor: Staff

LGLS 410. Senior Seminar in Legal Studies: Law and Social Movements

Credit: .5 unit

This is an upper-level seminar that offers students in the concentration an opportunity to integrate the various topics and approaches to which they were exposed in the law-related courses they have taken. Each year, the senior seminar will be designed around a specific substantive theme or topic; the themes as well as the format and approach to the course will change from year to year, depending upon the faculty members teaching the course and their interests. Prerequisite: permission of instructor.

Instructor: Staff

LGLS 493. Individual Study

Credit: .5 unit

This course is for students who wish to do advanced work beyond regular courses or to study topics not included in course offerings. Prerequisites: permission of instructor and program director.

Instructor: Staff