

# THE WOMEN'S COLLEGE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

## **LAS 2000 - Introduction to Law and Society**

Summer 2008: Saturday afternoon, 1:30-5:30 p.m.

June 21, 28, July 12, 19, 26\*, August 2, 23

***Please Note: Class will not meet on Saturday, August 9.***

***A replacement class will be held on Saturday, July 26***

Instructor: Linda Cobb-Reiley, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: By Appointment (Chambers Center 210)

Prerequisites: WRIT 1122 (or ENGG 1111), WRIT 1133 (or ENGG 1122), one SOCS course, and LAS 2200

Students are responsible for completing course prerequisites before registering for a class.

Students may be removed from a course for which they have not fulfilled the prerequisite course work.

### **Course Description**

The law pervades nearly every facet of human experience, from community organizations to business to government and, increasingly, to the most intimate details of our personal lives. Although a conservative institution bound by age-old traditions, the legal system is the social address for individuals, groups and communities struggling to achieve equality, redistribute power, and affect social change.

We will explore the many ways in which law is interwoven into our personal and communal lives. Questions that will guide our inquiry include: What is the law, and what is its purpose in society? What is the relationship between the law on the books and the law in action? How and why are laws developed? How do these laws affect us as a society, and as individuals? How do class, race, sex, or financial resources affect a person's access to the legal system? How is power wielded within our legal system? What place does punishment have within our society? What is the relationship between our legal system and violence? How do we resolve disputes? What roles do lawyers, judges, juries and the police play?

### **Course Objectives**

This course involves the interplay of law and society. It will not teach you what the law says, how to be a lawyer, or how to avoid legal problems. Rather, this course will lay the foundation for further studies within the Law and Society major. This course will give you a basic theoretical framework for examining how law transforms society, and how society transforms law. You will develop skills in close reading, dissecting arguments, analyzing complex socio/legal phenomena, organizing your ideas into written and oral responses, and engaging in dialogue within a supportive classroom community. You will leave this course with a broad, social science perspective about law and its meaning in a contemporary world.

## Course Requirements & Grading

*Two Reading Response Papers:* In the second and fourth classes, I will assign a discussion question or series of questions based upon selected course reading(s). A **3-page (double-spaced) written response to the assigned discussion question(s)** will be due in the following classes.

*News of the Day:* Throughout this course, you will take turns selecting a news story involving a current example of the impact of law on society, and/or of society on law. You will give a 10-minute presentation to the class about this article, **explaining how this news story illustrates the interaction of law and society.**

*Class Participation:* Our exploration of the interaction of law and society will be a community effort. You will have the opportunity to explore the assigned materials in depth outside of class, and are expected to come to class prepared to participate in class discussions about these materials. You are also expected to participate in discussions with guest speakers, in assigned group activities, and in an on-line dialogue with me and with your classmates. A Blackboard Discussion section will provide optional or additional opportunities for such dialogue. You will receive credit for your perceived efforts in all of these areas.

*Student Panel Presentation:* At the beginning of the course, you will select a topic to explore for your final research paper, and will be assigned to a Student Project Group. You will work with this group throughout the course to develop a panel discussion to be presented to the rest of the class on August 23rd. You will coordinate your group's individual research projects into a coherent presentation and, in our 6<sup>th</sup> class, will select a reading to assign to the rest of the class prior to your group's presentation on August 23rd.

*Research Proposal; Working Outline & Annotated Bibliography:* You will be required to begin work on your Final Research Paper immediately, and to work steadily on this project throughout the course. You will submit a one-page research proposal to me at our second class meeting, and you will need to complete the bulk of your research by our 4<sup>th</sup> class meeting, and submit a working outline and annotated bibliography for further feedback at that time. Additional details and instructions concerning these assignments will be provided in class.

*Final Research Paper:* Each Student Project Group member will be responsible for conducting her own research and preparing a 7-8 page research paper, with appropriate citations and references. You will prepare a presentation based upon this research paper as part of your Student Project Group's panel presentation on August 23rd. Additional details and instructions concerning this final research paper will be provided in class.

### **Final Course Grades will be determined as follows:**

Reading Response Papers (10% each)	20%
News of the Day	5%
Class Participation	15%
Panel Presentation	20%
Research Proposal, Outline, Bibliography	15%
Final Research Paper	25%

## Course Policies

*First and foremost:* If you ever have any questions about the course or are having difficulties with your assignments or the reading, *please* do not hesitate to contact me by email or to set up an appointment. I look forward to getting to know each of you and assisting in your learning process in any way I can.

*Attendance:* Attendance is mandatory and any absence will substantially impact the class preparation and participation portion of your grade as well as grades on assignments that may be due. If an emergency involving circumstances *beyond your control* arises, it is your responsibility to contact me by email or phone before your absence and to contact another student for missed class work and assignments. I will assist you in any way in such an emergency, but you must take the initiative.

*Blackboard:* This course has a Blackboard presence and you will have automatic access to it when you register for the class. Details expanding on the information in this paper syllabus as well as updates to the course schedule of readings and due dates will be posted on our Blackboard site. Therefore, it is imperative that you access the site regularly and frequently. If you need assistance accessing the Blackboard site, contact me.

*Late Assignments:* Late assignments will not be accepted for full credit and no assignment will be accepted more than 48 hours after the due date.

*Decorum:* You are expected to conduct yourself professionally in class. Cell phones and pagers must be turned off during class time. Computers may only be turned on and used for class and group work. You should exhibit general courtesy toward your classmates and instructor, and you are entitled to the same in return. All ideas are welcome in this class and will be respected by everyone in the class.

*Incompletes:* A grade of incomplete will be granted only if, for reasons beyond the student's control, she is unable to complete the work required for the course, and will not be automatically granted for absenteeism.

*Academic Integrity:* The Women's College fully endorses the University of Denver's Honor Code and the procedures put forth by the Office of Citizenship and Community Standards. Academic dishonesty – including plagiarism, cheating, and falsification of data and research – is in violation of the Code and will result in a failing grade for the assignment or for the course. As student members of a community committed to academic integrity and honesty, it is your responsibility to become familiar with the DU Honor Code and its procedures ([www.du.edu/honorcode](http://www.du.edu/honorcode)).

## Required Course Text

Austin Sarat, The Social Organization of Law: Introductory Readings (Roxbury Publishing Co. 2004). This text is available at the DU Bookstore.

Additional online supplemental readings may be required and will be posted on the course Blackboard web site.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

(**Except for the first class session**, the readings on this schedule are subject to change and probably will change. Assignment due dates will not change. All reading changes will be posted on our Blackboard website – so check it regularly.)

*Session 1*    6/21    **What is “the Law,” and What do we Expect from it?; Introduction to the Sociology of Law; Plea Bargaining**  
Sarat, *The Social Organization of Law*, pages 5-61, 73-74, 261-282. Be prepared to discuss these readings in depth during the first class.

*Session 2*    6/28    **How is the Law used as a Method of Social Control?; Capital Punishment**  
Sarat, *The Social Organization of Law*, pages 350-387, 472-532, 564-578.

*DUE:* Research Proposal

*Session 3*    7/12    **What do we expect from the Police?; How should the Police enforce the Law?**  
Sarat, *The Social Organization of Law*, pages 394-436, 463-469.

*DUE:* Reading Response Paper #1

*Session 4*    7/19    **What Roles Do Lawyers and Juries Play?**  
Sarat, *The Social Organization of Law*, pages 284-348, 548-556.

*DUE:* Research Paper Outline and Annotated Bibliography

*Session 5*    7/26    **How do we Use the Law to Resolve Disputes?**  
Sarat, *The Social Organization of Law*, pages 98-149.

*DUE:* Reading Response Paper #2

*Session 6*    8/2    **How Do Race, Sex and Class Affect Access to the Law?**  
Sarat, *The Social Organization of Law*, pages 73-74, 150-198, 214-256.

*DUE:* Assigned Readings for Panel Presentations

*Session 7*    8/23    **Student Panel Presentations!**  
Readings to be assigned by Student Project Groups for panel presentations

*DUE:* Final Research Paper