Instructor Information

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Course Description

What is the role of law in society? Can law effect social change or does it tend to protect the status quo? In this course, we will address these questions using various sociological and anthropological perspectives on law, legal authority, and legal institutions. As such, this course does not focus on specific cases or laws. Rather, our focus will be on analyzing the complex ways in which law constitutes everyday life and on how social actors interact with law. Throughout the course, we will further examine how the intersection of structures of inequality, like gender, race class, sexuality, nationality, among others, is at play in these processes. In addition, we will analyze the professional practice of law as well as the mobilization of law (be it domestic or international) by social movement actors, especially to make human rights claims in Canadian and global contexts. Thus, a main objective of this course is for students to apply conceptual understandings of law with empirical research of law “in action.”

This course is interactive – each class has a lecture component that will focus on the readings and small in-class exercises and class discussions geared towards the application of the course material to your own experience and to Canadian and global contexts. You must come prepared to participate and to share your thoughts and questions with the rest of the class.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, students will be able:
• to use sociological and anthropological perspectives to understand the role of law, legal authority, and legal institutions in society
• to analyze how the intersection of structures of inequality like gender, race, class, sexuality and nationality shapes social actors’ interactions with law and legal institutions
• to apply sociological and anthropological perspectives on law to analyze empirical research on law “in action”
• to critically reflect on the role of law in challenging or sustaining social inequality Canadian society and globally
• to develop critical reading and writing skills to demonstrate both the ability to comprehend course materials and apply them to everyday life

Prerequisites: SOAN*2112 or SOC*2700, SOAN*2120.
Restrictions: This is a priority access course. Enrolment may be restricted to particular programs or specializations. Please view departmental web site.
Textbooks and Other Materials
There is no textbook for this course. The readings will be available through ARES.

Evaluation Components

This course has different evaluation components, including ongoing participation in class discussions and exercises, a midterm and a final test, as well as various short written assignments (reading responses).