

THESIS COURSE
(Selected Topics in Law and Justice IV)

Prof.: Dr. Julian Hermida
Course number: JURI 4985 E
Meeting hours: Wednesdays 5.30 pm as per schedule below and office hours for individual consultations.
Term: Fall and Winter
Office: NW 206B
Tel.: 949-2301 ext. 4317
Office hours: Tuesdays from 2 pm to 4 pm and from 5.30 to 6, Thursdays from 2 pm to 4 pm and from 5.30 pm to 7 pm, and by appointment. Winter office hours may change. If so, they will be announced in class.
Email address: julian.hermida@algomau.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course gives you an opportunity to produce and defend a thesis under my supervision in the field of Law and Justice. This is a process-oriented writing course that integrates reading, research, writing, and oral presentations. You will carry out a research project on a legal topic of your interest. Apart from the thesis, you must compile a portfolio with all the drafts, notes about the texts read, my feedback, research proposal, literature review, class activities, and any written work done for the project such as outlines, book reviews, etc. You will also present the results of each stage of your work to me and the other students in the course. Other members of the University community may be invited to the presentations. The thesis is expected to conform to appropriate standards of scholarship. I will encourage you to send your thesis for publication. Additionally, you will engage in a series of class activities aimed at helping you develop your reading, research, writing, and presentation skills.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course is conceived so that you can:

1. provide an in-depth exploration of a topic of special interest.
2. explain and apply relevant theories and laws in the chosen area.
3. interpret theories and doctrines, and give recommendations where appropriate.
4. acquire knowledge on the chosen topic and apply the knowledge, experience, and skills learned in the Law and Justice programme to the chosen topic.
5. show the ability to analyse various aspects of a topic, review, and synthesise knowledge.
6. apply various research techniques, find suitable sources of information, and acknowledge them in the research project.
7. acquire and apply academic legal reading skills and general academic reading skills.
8. Develop effective communicative skills to present research on Law and Justice issues.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Conduct independent research on Law and Justice topics.
- Produce a thesis of publishable quality.
- Effectively present and defend your research orally.

WRITING PROCESS MODEL

The writing process model underlying this course is the composing process of expert academic writers, a problem-driven process which recognizes that the actual act of writing is a process of thinking, discovering, and developing ideas. This description of the writing process emphasizes the fact that expert academic writers are driven by their engagement with questions or problems and by their need to see their writing as a contribution to an ongoing conversation. Expert academic writing is a lengthy and indivisible process of multiple drafting and revisions.

METHODOLOGY

You are expected to actively work in class and to work on your research project independently outside class. This includes regularly attending the scheduled course meetings, actively participating in the class activities, and meeting with me individually during my office hours. You will also have to engage in independent reading, research, and writing. Additionally, you will have to give and receive feedback throughout the course and to make oral presentations about your work. My role is to guide you in your progression, to encourage you to construct a sound analysis, and to design a structured written report. It is your responsibility to get the most out of our meetings and classes.



RESPONSIBILITIES

My responsibilities are as follows.

- To approve your topic for the research project.
- To advise on theoretical content.
- To advise on possible sources of information, and methods of data collection and analysis.
- To assist with problems encountered in your reading process and to provide ongoing input over the duration of the research and writing stages.
- To comment on the project as it develops.
- To advise on the structure of the thesis.
- To offer constructive criticism.
- To encourage you to publish your thesis.

Your responsibilities are as follows.

- To proactively and regularly seek help from me.

- To be familiar with requirements and regulations regarding the course.
- To meet regularly with the whole group of students taking this course on the scheduled meeting days and with me during my office hours.
- To actively participate in the class activities.
- To bring questions and issues to our meetings.
- To pass in the drafts in both printed and electronic copies on the agreed dates.
- To read and analyse the texts dealing with writing, research, and your selected topic.
- To carry out extensive independent research.
- To produce a portfolio with the drafts, reading notes, and feedback.
- To present orally your research proposal and your thesis.
- To present and discuss on topics related to writing and research.
- To give and to receive feedback.
- To consider submitting your thesis for publication.

THESIS REQUIREMENTS:

- Approximately: 10,000 words.
- Font size: 12.
- Double line spacing.
- Correct use of English (spelling, grammar, and clarity).
- Every source used must be documented correctly and consistently according to the appropriate referencing system, e.g. McGill Red Book, Harvard Blue Book, MLA, APA, etc.
- Both a printed copy and an electronic copy of the thesis must be handed in to me.

EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

Evaluation is conceived mainly as formative; and feedback will be provided all throughout the course. There will be plenty of opportunities to experiment, try, fail, and receive formative feedback in advance of and separate from summative evaluation. I will also help you develop the metacognitive tools and strategies so that you can assess your own learning progress. As this is a process-oriented writing, research, and presentation course, you will be evaluated on your whole writing, research, and presentation process and not only on the final writing product. So, your understanding of the readings, your preliminary drafts, class participation, preparation for meetings, discussions, presentations, and your portfolio, together with the final writing paper, will be major components of the evaluation. So, writing a passing thesis is not enough to pass the course. Late work, unsatisfactory preliminary drafts, poor presentations, lack of participation in the course meetings, or missed appointments can result in a low final grade.

The evaluation of your achievement of the learning outcomes will be based on the following components: class participation, the research proposal, the presentation of the research proposal, the thesis, and the presentation of the thesis. Class participation accounts for 20% of the final grade. The research proposal accounts for 10% of the final grade; and its presentation accounts for 10%. The final thesis accounts for 40% of the final grade; and its presentation accounts for 20%.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

You are expected to actively participate in every class with a positive attitude and to treat your classmates and instructor with respect. You are expected to get actively involved with the activities, to critically analyze the proposed problems and situations, to actively participate in small group discussions, to

contribute your analysis to the whole class, and to complete all reading and written assignments. You will also conduct oral presentations throughout the course. You must compile a portfolio with all the drafts, notes about the texts read, my feedback, research proposal, class activities, literature review, the course outline, and any written work done for the project such as outlines, book reviews, etc. You need to bring your portfolio to every class and to the meetings in my office.

Passing requirements and scale of evaluation: all the evaluation criteria have the same value.

1. Does the student actively and meaningfully participate in every class? Are the student's contributions productive? Does the student participate in an appropriate manner that contributes to class discussions?
2. Does the student show a positive attitude toward his or her classmates, the instructor, and the activities? Does the student work productively in small groups?
3. Is the student prepared for every class? Does the student do the agreed readings? Does the student show an understanding of the texts?
4. Does the student ask useful questions that contribute to the development of the class? Do the student's participation and involvement in class foster collective understanding?
5. Does the student's participation show a good command of academic oral and written skills?
6. Does the student come prepared to course meetings and the appointments with the supervisor? Does the student proactively seek help from the supervisor?
7. Is the portfolio complete? Does the portfolio show evidence of the student's active engagement with his/her research and writing project?

RESEARCH PROPOSAL PRESENTATION

An oral presentation differs from the written material in its level of detail, organization, and delivery. It is helpful to the audience if you use visual presentation tools. You may NOT read your paper or notes.

The objective of the presentation of the research proposal is to explain your proposed work. You need to clearly explain the problem, what you will do, and the possible outcomes. You also need to analyze the significance of your work by making reference to relevant literature, and how you plan to conduct the research.

Passing requirements and scale of evaluation: all the evaluation criteria have the same value.

1. Does the presentation define the problem clearly? Does the presentation show a clear, coherent, and comprehensive treatment of the problem?
2. Has the presentation followed the required formalities, including the fact that students may not read from notes while presenting?
3. Does the presentation integrate knowledge acquired from the selected readings? Is there an effective and original integration of knowledge acquired throughout the course?
4. Does the presentation clearly show the proposed solution or the research plan?
5. Has the presentation engaged the active participation of the audience?
6. Has the student answered questions from the audience in a satisfactory way?

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The main goal of the research proposal is to outline your research plan.

You need to state and define your research problem, your objectives, the importance of your problem, how you will do research, what the literature has said about this problem, and your anticipated results.

Passing requirements and scale of evaluation: a positive response must be given to the following questions in order to approve the essay. All these criteria have the same value.

- 1) Does the research proposal adequately indentify a problem?
- 2) Does the research proposal clearly explain the significance of the problem?
- 3) Does the research proposal show an awareness of the literature on the problem?
- 4) Does the research proposal adequately explain the methodology, theoretical framework, and research plan?
- 5) Does the research proposal clearly state the thesis and the anticipated results?
- 6) Does the research proposal integrate readings discussed throughout the course?
- 7) Does the research proposal follow the style, language, citation method, and organization analyzed in class?

THESIS PRESENTATION

The objective of this presentation is to explain your work. You will have to summarize the thesis problem, its major objectives, the content, methodology, significance, results, and conclusions. Then, the rest of the students, guests, and I will ask you questions about your thesis. You will need to be prepared to answer a broad array of questions about your project. It is helpful to the audience if you use visual presentation tools. You may NOT read your paper or notes.

Passing requirements and scale of evaluation: all the evaluation criteria have the same value.

1. Does the presentation define the problem clearly? Does the presentation show a clear, coherent, and comprehensive treatment of the problem?
2. Has the presentation followed the required formalities, including the fact that students may not read from notes while presenting?
3. Does the presentation integrate knowledge acquired from the selected readings? Is there an effective and original integration of knowledge acquired throughout the course?
4. Does the presentation clearly show the proposed solution or the research plan?
5. Has the presentation engaged the active participation of the audience?
6. Has the student answered questions from the audience in a satisfactory way?

THESIS

Passing requirements and scale of evaluation: a positive response must be given to the following questions in order to approve the essay. All these criteria have the same value.

- 1) Does the essay adequately indentify the research problem? Does it have a clear thesis?
- 2) Does the essay clearly explain the significance of the problem?

- 3) Does the essay adequately review the literature on the research problem?
- 4) Does the essay adequately explain the methodology? Does it clearly identify the theoretical framework?
- 5) Does the essay integrate readings discussed throughout the course?
- 6) Does the essay follow the style, language, citation method, and organization analyzed in class?
- 7) Has the student adequately incorporated feedback received throughout the course, including feedback received during the presentation of the research proposal?

Summary of the assessment

Evaluation tool	Grade weight	Length	Deadline
Class participation	20%	Extensive, positive, and active participation	Every class
Research proposal	10%	5 to 8 pages	Nov. 16, 2011
Presentation of research proposal	10%	5 to 15 minutes, depending on actual student enrolment	Nov. 16, 2011 and following class if needed.
Thesis	40%	10000 words	April 4, 2012. (Submission of first draft: March 7, 2012 and submission of second draft March 21, 2012).
Thesis presentation	20%	5 to 15 minutes, depending on actual student enrolment	March 21, 2012 and following class if needed.

GRADING SYSTEM

Grade	Percentage of Grade Value	Definition
A	80-100	Excellent performance
B	70-79	Good performance
C	60-69	Satisfactory performance
D	50-59	Marginal performance
F	0-49	Failure (inadequate performance)

CLASS SCHEDULE

This is a tentative calendar of readings and class activities. If class discussions or class activities take longer than originally estimated because everybody gets involved, I will not cut them short to follow this schedule. I will simply put them off for the following class or I will reschedule them. Additionally, I may

substitute new topics or activities for some of the ones included in this schedule, particularly if most of you show an interest for some topics not planned to be covered. Changes to this schedule will be announced in class and posted on the course website.

THESIS COURSE

Class	Task	Readings	Deliverables
FALL TERM			
Class 1 Sep. 7	Introduction and orientation to the course. Course outline Website.	Course outline Course website	
Class 2 Sep. 14	Legal Positivism	Sarat, Austin, Beyond Legal Realism	
Class 3 Sep. 21	Law and Social Sciences	Dawson, Brettel, Legal Research in a Social Science Setting	
Class 4 Oct. 5	Research ethics	Algoma University Policy on Integrity in Research and Scholarship, Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research involving Humans.	
Class 5 Oct. 19	Law and Social Studies (cont.).	Dawson, Brettel, Legal Research in a Social Science Setting	
Class 6 Oct. 26	How to define your research problem. Academic legal writing Annotated bibliography	Read the literature on the chosen topic. in consultation with me. Lebovits, The Legal Writer Bean, Engaging Ideas (excerpts)	A one-page memo on your research problem (i) why it is important, (ii) who is affected, (iii) what is the purpose of your essay, (iv) what do you want to accomplish.
Class 7 Nov. 2	Research proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background • Literature review • Theoretical framework • Methodology Methodology and Analysis Conclusions		Prepare an annotated bibliography
Class 8 Nov. 16	Presentation of research proposals		Submission of research proposal
Class 9 Nov. 23	Presentation of research proposals (cont.) if needed.		
WINTER TERM			
Class 1 Jan. 11	Organizing a thesis on Law and Justice topics		
Class 2	Plagiarism – what it is and how to		

Jan. 25	avoid it. Legal research and citation Preemption checks		
Class 3 Feb. 8	Presentation skills		
Class 4 March 7	The research process		Submission of first draft
Class 5 March 21	Thesis presentations		Submission of second draft
Class 6 March 28	Thesis presentations		
Class 7 April 4			Final submission

REQUIRED READINGS

This is a reading intensive course. There is a list of required journal articles listed on the class schedule and posted on the course website. Additionally, each student will have to compile a list of readings for the selected topic and read these texts deeply.

WEB SITE

A web site for this independent course is available at <http://www.julianhermida.com>.
You must regularly check both the course website and your Algoma U email account.

RESEARCH ETHICS

If your research involves human beings, such as interviewing or observing, you will need to obtain authorization from the Research Ethics Board BEFORE you start dealing with people. We will discuss this process extensively in class. Please let me know as soon as possible if your research will involve human beings.

OFFICE HOURS POLICY

You are required to come see me regularly during my office hours. It is a chance to get to know each other and to talk about the course, your thesis, writing, reading, and research strategies, or whatever else you would like to discuss. I am also available to write letters of reference and to help you plan for future graduate studies or a professional career. I will be glad to help you with the publication of your thesis.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT POLICY

Unless otherwise authorized by me in writing, all writing assignments must be submitted personally in hard copy IN CLASS on the due date followed by an electronic version by email. For further clarification, written assignments submitted to the Faculty Secretaries, left in my mailbox, sent only by email, or slid under my office door, will not be accepted for marking, and students will not receive any credit. Unless I

have approved an extension in writing, at my discretion, written assignments submitted after the deadline will either not be accepted for marking, or will be accepted for marking with late penalties. Late penalties will be as followed. If the written assignment is submitted the class following the deadline, a 25% late penalty will be deducted from the mark. A 50% late penalty will be applied to those assignments submitted two classes after the deadline, and no mark will be given if submitted after two classes following the deadline. In those exceptional cases where I grant an extension, you will have to submit your assignment personally IN CLASS on the new specified date.

UNIVERSITY ATTENDANCE POLICY

The general regulations of the university require punctual and regular attendance at the various academic exercises. If there are extenuating circumstances related to an absence, the instructor should be notified in writing. Absences in excess of 20% may jeopardize receipt of credit for the course. **Given the nature of the course, I will strictly enforce this policy.**

ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR THIS COURSE

Your presence and participation in every class are an essential part of the learning process for you and your classmates. Therefore, attendance will be taken at all classes and is mandatory. **Students that have an absence in more than 20% of the classes will NOT receive credit for this course regardless of the reason for the absence,** including without limitations absences due to medical reasons, sports competitions, and employment obligations. If you missed classes because you were not registered in the course, those classes that you missed will count as absences in order to calculate this 20% rule. This is because I firmly believe that the class constitutes a unique learning environment and most of what you will learn takes place in class. For further clarification, participation in sports competitions does not exempt you from attending class or for complying with other course requirements. If your sports activities prevent you from regularly attending class, please consider dropping this course as your grade may be seriously affected. Oral presentations will not be rescheduled. If you miss the presentation you may not receive credit for that presentation. **Under no circumstances will a student that missed a class receive credit under the class participation evaluation component for that class.**

PRIVILEGES: EXTENSIONS, WAIVERS, AND OTHER AUTHORIZATIONS

Extensions, waivers, reschedules, rewrites, make-ups, and extra-credit activities are considered privileges, given on a case by case basis and as a matter of courtesy. For further clarification, I may or may not grant them or I may grant them to some students and not to others, depending on a number of factors. In general, I will only grant privileges in exceptional circumstances. The following are examples of circumstances that may never be considered exceptional: internet outages, computer or printing problems, compliance with a job supervisor's request to do overtime or an extra shift, or sports commitments. You must plan ahead in order to comply with all the course requirements. This means, among other things, not starting your work the night before the deadline. You must request a privilege in writing. If I grant it, you must keep a copy of the privilege given by me in writing. Privileges not requested in writing and not given in writing are not valid.

I may also change the attendance policy –or some aspects thereof- in the event classes are interrupted due to a pandemic, or if students have to miss class because of duly documented injury or illness. Please note that medical policies duly adopted by the University may supersede the rules in this course outline, which is not intended to contradict any such University policy.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who would like to discuss classroom and/or evaluation accommodations should contact me as soon as possible.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The University takes a very serious view of such offences as plagiarism, cheating, and impersonation. Penalties for dealing with such offences will be strictly enforced. Please read the Student Code of Conduct (Academic) on plagiarism and other offences against academic honesty. Please note that any self-misrepresentation in order to avoid attendance, meeting of assignment deadlines, writing of tests or examinations and/or completion of assignments, constitutes academic dishonesty. The following web site contains a complete policy statement on academic dishonesty and attendance. You are encouraged to read it for further clarification: http://www.algomau.ca/uploads/file/pdf/chapter_3.pdf.

TEACHING EVALUATIONS

Please remember to complete the electronic teaching evaluations towards the end of the course. The University considers the evaluation instrumental in assessing teaching. The University will announce the period and instructions for completing the evaluations.

FILM COPYRIGHT

If you decide to show a video in class for a class activity or presentation, you must make sure that the University has the copyright to show that video in class, even if it is only an excerpt. This includes videos that you may find online and DVDs that you rent or own. Currently, the University is subscribed to Audio Cine Films and Criterion Pictures, two licensing organizations. Algoma University has also acquired rights to show some films from the National Film Board. BEFORE showing a video in class, please make sure that you will be able to show it without infringing copyright law. If in doubt, please ask me. You can also check with the library.