



**POLI 1301 Introduction to Law**  
**Political Science Department**  
**Fall 2026-Winter 2027**  
**Online, Asynchronous**

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Office Hours: By appointment, via Zoom.

**Course Description**

In this Introduction to Law course, we will study the foundational principles and theories of legal systems and constitutions in general before turning to an examination of Canadian law and the Supreme Court's reasoning in many important legal decisions that have shaped the Canadian regime. In the first part of the course, we will consider theoretical and legal texts addressing the ways that modern constitutions like our own have been structured to protect freedom, equality and justice as well the considerable difficulties involved in achieving this. The remaining two parts of the course will increasingly focus on the function and power of the Canadian judiciary as it interprets the Constitution in a range of areas: The second part will feature an examination of separation of powers and federalism according to Canada's written laws and conventions, and especially through the lens of Supreme Court arguments. The final part of the course will be a 10-week long survey of landmark Supreme Court decisions in areas of Charter rights, criminal law, and civil torts. Students will develop a broad understanding of defining concepts in Canadian law and begin to hone their ability to read and comprehend legal decisions. At the same time, they will have the opportunity to engage independently, and with their peers, in critical and careful reflection on the serious dilemmas and questions that Canadian law must confront.

## Course Objectives

This course is designed to provide students with a solid introduction to the legal topics and concepts outlined above, but also to enhance their abilities to (a) engage well with their peers through thoughtful online discussions about very important and sometimes controversial human questions; (b) write clearly and insightfully about complex and important legal questions, (c) and read and analyze legal texts and other complex political writings with care.

## Course Requirements, Procedures and Policies

### Required Texts:

For this course, there is not a textbook for purchase. Instead, all class readings will be posted under "Assignments" (along with all lectures) on a special course website set up on Perusall.com. You will be required to complete your readings from this Assignments tab. Although you are not required to purchase any textbooks, you are required to create a **free** Perusall account (see below for more details about this). **(Cost for texts = free)**

### Grade Distribution:

Perusall Weekly Assignments & Participation: 30%

Written Assignments: 10% x 2 = 20%

Exam 1: 12.5%

Exam 2: 12.5%

Final Exam: 25%

### Perusall Weekly Assignments and Participation:

Perusall Account Set-Up: Students are required to create a (free) Perusall account on Perusall.com. You will have to enter a specific code to join our Perusall class once you've registered. **I have posted the necessary code on our d2l site under "Content."**

### Weekly Assignments:

Weekly assignments will be posted to Perusall, and they will require students to read, annotate and comment thoughtfully on the posted readings and to engage in written discussion with their classmates on Perusall. I have designed these assignments to encourage, develop and measure students' engagement with the major themes, concepts and questions of the course. On Tuesdays, I will also post a short lecture (typically a video; approximately 30-45 minutes in length) providing background, clarifications or

introductory concepts for the current week's assignment, and often responding to ideas and questions students have contributed to the current week's discussion or important points raised in the previous week.

#### Assignment Deadlines:

Each weekly assignment will be posted by the weekend before the corresponding week begins, and it will have its own listed deadline (typically Friday night). For full credit, you must meet this deadline. However, partial credit can still be earned for comments submitted after the deadline date until 11:59 pm on the final day of the course (April 6, 2027). Partial credit declines linearly (each day late = less credit) from the due date of each assignment.

All posted assignments for the course involve complex ideas and difficult arguments. Many of you will be reading legal codes and legal decisions for the first time, which will involve immersing yourselves in a new and unfamiliar kind of language. Therefore, you should be prepared to prepare your readings slowly and you should expect that it may take reading several times before you will have a strong grasp of the content. You should expect to put time into the class throughout the week, and to revisit complex readings more than once.

#### Assignment Marking:

Each Perusall assignment is equally weighted. All assignments are required and should be done in order.

To achieve high marks, students need to demonstrate careful and thorough reading of the assigned texts and thoughtful reflection on their significance. Sustained engagement throughout the week will have a positive effect on your mark. As you read, and post commentary and questions on Perusall, you should

- 1) Engage one another and the readings through thoughtful, charitable and reasoned discussion.
- 2) Read and analyze the assigned texts with care and insight, considering the questions raised and how arguments and concepts pertain to your own experiences and understanding.
- 3) Do the above in a way that primarily responds to the readings, while keeping in mind any reading questions I have provided at the introduction to each assignment. **You should not be limited by the reading questions, or feel required to always attempt to answer them directly – they are general questions meant to help you organize the particular parts of the readings in your mind.**

#### Perusall Mark Display

Because many students find initial feedback encouraging as they work through their assignments, I have enabled a Perusall feature which will display a preliminary mark in real time based on the work already you have already completed. These preliminary marks are automatically generated based on

course settings I have designed. This is not your true mark, since it is generated by the Perusall system rather than my judgment about your work for the week, and it is obviously possible for students to trick the system into “thinking” their comments are more insightful/thoughtful/relevant than they really are. After each week, I will review and adjust these preliminary marks as needed to provide you with your real weekly assignment mark. Some weeks I will provide feedback with these marks suggesting ways that you could engage more deeply with the readings or posing questions and ideas for your further consideration. Note that if you try to game the system based on the real time scores your commentary produces, you should expect a reduction between the preliminary mark and your real score. **My adjustments providing your real mark will be made by 11:59 pm on the Friday after the deadline for each assignment.**

Also, please note that Perusall will automatically generate a mark for your engagement with each posted lecture (since they are posted as “Assignments” on the site.) You should disregard the marks on lectures. Although I expect you to view and consider each of these lectures as part of your studies in the course, you are not receiving a direct mark for doing so. I will not go back to alter the scores that appear here, but please be aware that they don’t matter. Only the scores for reading assignments factor into this part of your mark.

**Written Assignments:** These special written submissions will be 4-5 pages in length, responding to prompts and instructions that I will provide you several weeks before they are due. The first assignment will be due October 11th at 11:59 pm. The second will be due February 28th at 11:59 pm. Late submissions will see a grade deduction of 2% per day. Extensions may be requested well in advance of the due date, but not afterwards.

**Exams:** Weeks when the first two exams will occur are given in the outline below; note that there is a limited 24 hour window during these weeks when the exam is to be completed. The final exam is yet to be scheduled; Lakehead’s exam timetable will provide this date when it is available. Exams are not cumulative; each covers the material that has been assigned since the previous exam. Each will be administered through d2l, and will include some combination of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, true or false, or short answer questions (different students will not receive the same question sets).

### **Other Important Policies**

**Academic Honesty:** Academic honesty is expected of all Lakehead University students. It should go without saying that cheating, collusion, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are expected to make themselves fully familiar with Lakehead’s policies in this area. You should familiarize yourself with the Student Code of Conduct – Academic Integrity – and, in particular, sections 26 and 83 through 85. All of

these policies will be enforced in full in this course, and the Code will be adhered to in terms of disciplinary action. It is worth emphasizing the following:

**PLAGIARISM INVOLVES PRESENTING ANOTHER’S WORK, IDEAS, THEORIES, OR INTERPRETATION AS ONE’S OWN.**

To avoid plagiarism, always:

- 1) Put quotation marks around any words taken from sources.
- 2) Paraphrase material completely; do not simply rearrange words from a source or change them using a thesaurus, etc.
- 3) Whether it is being quoted or paraphrased in your work, always give accurate and complete citations for all material that comes from another source.
- 4) Avoid borrowing entire arguments or ideas from another writer. Your arguments should be original to you.

**GenAI Use Prohibited:**

Generative artificial intelligence (Generative AI or GenAI) is a category of AI systems capable of generating text, images, or other media in response to prompts. These systems include ChatGPT and its variants Bing (built by OpenAI) and Bard (built by Google) among several others. Other Generative AI models include artificial intelligence art systems such as Stable Diffusion, Midjourney, and DALL-E.

Any use of GenAI systems to produce assignments for this course is not permitted. All work submitted for evaluation in this course must be the student's original work. The submission of any work containing AI generated content will be considered a violation of academic integrity ("Use of Unauthorized Materials").

**Academic Accommodations:** Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities/medical conditions. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities/medical conditions to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability/medical condition and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, please email [sas@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:sas@lakeheadu.ca) or visit <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>.

## Course Outline

NOTE: Readings and schedule may be adjusted as necessary at my discretion.

|           |        |                                                                                                          |
|-----------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sept 8-11 | Week 1 | Course Introduction: Syllabus, Perusall Set-up<br>"Making the most of learning with Perusall" assignment |
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## PART I: Introduction to Constitutionalism, Law and Political Science

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| Sept 14-18 | Week 2 | Introduction to Fundamental Concepts and Limits of the Law:<br>Lon Fuller: "The Problem of the Grudge Informer" |
|------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Sept 21-25    Week 3    Ancient Theory of Constitutions and Law  
Excerpts from Aristotle's *Politics* and *Ethics*

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| Sept 28-Oct 2 | Week 4 | Early Modern Theory on Constitutions and Law<br>Excerpts from Hobbes' <i>Leviathan</i> |
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| Oct 5-9 | Week 5 | Writing a Constitution: The American Model<br><i>Federalist Papers</i> 9,51, 78<br>Recommended: <i>U.S. Constitution</i> and <i>Bill of Rights</i> |
|---------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Oct 12-16 FALL STUDY WEEK: No Classes

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| Oct 19-23 | Week 6 | Canada's Constitutional System: Written and Unwritten<br>Robert Danay: Excerpts from "Chapter 1: Introduction" in <i>CCLOAC The Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i><br>Recommended: <i>The Constitution Act, 1867</i> |
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| Oct 26-30 | Week 7 | Unwritten Constitutions: Indigenous Oral Histories and Canadian Law<br><i>Delgamuukw v. BC</i> (1997) |
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Nov 2-6      Week 8      **Exam 1: available for 24 hr period starting Thurs., November 5 @ 10 am.**

## PART II: Separation of Powers and Federalism in Canadian Law

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|--------------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nov 9-13     | Week 9  | Introduction to Legislative and Executive Branches in Canada's System<br>Bedard-Rubin: Excerpts from "Chapter 2: Parliament and Crown" in <i>CCLOAC</i> |
| Nov 16-20    | Week 10 | Parliamentary Sovereignty and Rule of Law in Canada<br><i>Bacon v. Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corp.</i> (1990)                                         |
| Nov 23-27    | Week 11 | Executive Power and Prerogative in Canada<br><i>Black v. Canada (Prime Minister)</i> (2001)<br><i>Canada (Prime Minister) v. Khadr</i> (2010)           |
| Nov 30-Dec 4 | Week 12 | The Judiciary in Canada and Its Expanded Role under the <i>Charter</i><br>Ken Loach: "The Legitimacy of Judicial Review" from <i>CRF</i>                |
| Jan 4-8      | Week 13 | Canadian Judicial Review: Introduction to <i>Charter S.1</i> and the <i>Oakes</i> Test<br>Excerpts and commentary on <i>R. v. Oakes</i> (1986)          |
| Jan 11-15    | Week 14 | Federalism and Disputes over Power<br><i>Reference re: Firearms Act</i> (Can)                                                                           |
| Jan 18-22    | Week 15 | <b>Exam 2: available for 24 hr period starting Thurs., January 21 @ 10 am.</b>                                                                          |

### PART III: Landmark Cases in Canadian Law

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| Jan 25-29 | Week 16 | Charter Rights: Freedom of Expression:<br>Introduction to Freedom of Expression<br><i>R. v Keegstra</i> (1988)                                                                  |
| Feb 1-5   | Week 17 | Charter Rights: Religious Freedom<br>Introduction to Religious Freedom (with <i>Amselem</i> case excerpts)<br><i>Multani v. Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys</i> (2006) |
| Feb 8-12  | Week 18 | Charter Rights: Introduction to Equality and Section 15<br>Excerpts from <i>Andrews v. Law Society of British Columbia</i> (1989)<br>Supplementary Reading on Equality Rights   |

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| Feb 15-19    | WINTER STUDY WEEK: No Classes |                                                                                                                                   |
| Feb 22-26    | Week 19                       | Charter Rights: Section 7 and Assisted Suicide<br><i>Carter v. Canada (AG)</i> (2015)<br>Supplementary Readings                   |
| Mar 1-5      | Week 20                       | Introduction to Criminal Law and Elements of Culpability<br>Introductory Reading on Criminal Law<br><i>R. v. Martineau</i> (1996) |
| Mar 8-12     | Week 21                       | Crime and Consent<br><i>R. v. Jobidon</i> (1991)                                                                                  |
| Mar 15-19    | Week 22                       | Criminal Sentencing and Its Purposes<br><i>R. v. Gladue</i> (1999)                                                                |
| Mar 22-25    | Week 23                       | Introduction to Civil Torts<br>Excerpts from Philip Osborne's <i>The Law of Torts</i>                                             |
| Mar 30-Apr 5 | Week 24                       | The Tort of Negligence<br>Excerpts from <i>Mustapha v. Culligan</i> (2008)<br><i>Crocker v. Sundance Northwest Resorts</i> (1988) |
| <b>TBD</b>   | <b>FINAL EXAM</b>             |                                                                                                                                   |