

Syllabus

Econ 484: Law and Economics Spring 2021

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Course Goals and Objectives

The goal of this course is to help you achieve a basic understanding of the economic analysis of several areas of law in the United States. We will cover topics related to encouraging and incentivizing economically efficient and socially desirable behavior through examining [property law](#) as well as contract law.

Prerequisites

Principles and Intermediate Microeconomic Theory

Text

There is nothing for you to purchase for this course. Selections of text will be linked within the course for free due to the generosity of Robert Cooter and Tom Ulen providing you free content from their textbook—Cooter and Ulen, Law and Economics (6th ed.) In addition, portions of this text will be quoted from directly in some of the lessons of the course.

Assessment

Your grade for the course will be based on exams and participation.

Exams	40%
Weekly Participation	60%

Students enrolled for graduate credit will need to do an extra class project in addition to the exams and class participation (details will be forthcoming.)

Grading Scale

The percentage cutoffs for each grade will be as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A-, A, A+	90-100%
B-, B, B+	80-89.99%
C-, C, C+	70-79.99%
D-, D, D+	60-69.99%
F	0-59.99%

I reserve the right to curve the course at the end of the semester. Student grades will not decrease due to a curve. *Truly* exceptional situations are dealt with on an individual basis.

If you “need” or “want” a certain grade in the course, you should work hard and study diligently from the beginning of the semester; there will be nothing you can do to raise your grade above what you have earned. Once the scale is assigned by the instructor at the end of the course, no exceptions will be made; we do not round grades up.

Class Format

Our course this term will be asynchronous and will use the Moodle learning management system which can be found at learn.ilinois.edu. Each week you will be asked to engage in a variety of activities including elements such as text readings, content questions/quizzes and discussion forums. The elements and number of requirements might look different in different weeks, but each week’s grade will be based on the activities for that week. The activities will be posted in the order in which you are expected to complete them.

Like the traditional in-person Law and Economics course, this class will utilize the Socratic method. This means the primary tool for learning will not be me “talking at” you but rather asking questions to encourage a dialogue and debate that will strengthen your critical thinking.

Forums

Our debates/discussions will take place using the forums that will be part of the course content each week. In each forum I will post a case or law or other question for discussion. Each student will need to make an initial post before being able to see what the other students have posted (there is a 15 minute waiting period that I wish I could eliminate but it’s not possible.) In most forum questions I will ask you to choose an option or take a position on the case or question. You will be directed how to indicate your choice which you should do in the subject line of your post. Then you should explain why you took that position. After you have passed the waiting period and can see your classmates’ posts, you should engage in a discussion supporting and opposing the various points of view your classmates have made. I may post clarifying questions and questions to guide you as you discuss but I expect the students to be the main drivers of

the discussion. Be sure to keep checking back throughout the week to hear the views of all your classmates.

Forum Grading

If students are afraid to “take a stab” at answering a question or suggesting a viewpoint because they are worried that their comments will be graded for ‘correctness’ or accuracy then we won’t have very productive and thoughtful discussions. We want students to be able to throw out ideas and then work together with their classmates to flush the ideas out and arrive at the best conclusions. I find that students who take the risk to challenge the status quo learn and grow the most. In addition, all students have different learning styles and engage the material in their own unique way. Because of this, you will not be graded in your posts for accuracy but for the intellectual curiosity and thoughtfulness with which you engage. You will be judged on the contribution you make to the conversation rather than the number of times you post a comment. (Be sure to try to engage in 'back and forth' discussions rather than only posting opinions on a classmate's post.) Appropriateness, courtesy and debate that is respectful of others is expected. I know that can be unsettling because students often want to know “how many times do I have to make a comment to get the full points” but this is about engaging and learning and not checking a box. As a guideline I will offer that making one or two brief responses to your fellow classmates' posts is generally not sufficient; contributing to the forums will involve significant time in reading and responding back and forth with other students about the case/topic presented.

Content Questions/Lessons

Most weeks, there will be some course content presented through a ‘quiz.’ This is an interactive teaching tool that will introduce students to the concepts for the week. Often these quizzes will be restricted to being completed sequentially—take special note that this means you cannot ‘backtrack’ and go back to answer questions you skipped at a later time. In addition to questions graded based on the accuracy of your responses, these quizzes will typically contain some open-ended questions that will be graded similar to how the forums are graded—not on the precision of your answers, but rather on the intellectual curiosity and thoroughness of your engagement.

Accommodations and honors agreements

We do not offer honors learning agreements for this course. Disability Accommodations -To obtain disability-related academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) as soon as possible. To contact DRES you may visit 1207 S. Oak St., Champaign, call 333-4603 (V/TTY), or e-mail a message to disability@uiuc.edu. Any student registered with DRES requires accommodations should talk to me before or after class and then email me their RFA letter at least two weeks before accommodations are needed (earlier if possible).

Policy on Cheating

Violations of academic integrity as described in the Student Code will be taken extremely seriously. Students found cheating in the course (or helping others to cheat) will be penalized according to the code's guidelines.