

Law and Justice Across Cultures Summer 2024

Instructor: Brandon Hunter-Pazzara

Email: bh752@georgetown.edu

Meeting Time: MTWTH 1:00pm – 2:55pm, July 7th – August 8th 2025

Location: TBD

Office Hours: 3 – 4pm Tuesday and Thursdays after class or via Zoom by appointment

Course Description

In this course, we will examine how societies across time and in different places have conceived of law and justice. Course readings will draw from a range of ethnographic material informed by critical approaches to the study of both concepts. The goal of this course is for students to acquire a robust analytical toolkit for understanding how notions of law, legality, and justice emerge in distinct cultural settings and sociopolitical contexts. Achieving this goal will mean moving across various subfields and issues explored by legal anthropologists such as colonialism, citizenship, social inequality, international law, and human rights. Along these lines, we will interrogate the assumption that law and justice are synonymous—the former serving as an approximation for the latter—by analyzing ethnographic studies of contemporary social and political movements, both in the United States and globally, where law and justice are claimed to be in tension.

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Name and discuss the foundational concepts, themes, and methods for studying law and justice anthropologically.
- Identify the way those concepts, themes, and methods have evolved over time by reference to contemporary studies and ongoing social and political debates.
- Draw from anthropological research and theoretical concepts to produce cross-cultural analyses of law and justice issues.

Course Materials

In this five-week course, we will read the following four books:

- [Translating Food Sovereignty: Cultivating Justice in an Age of Transnational Governance](#) by Matthew Canfield
- [Life Beside Bars: Confinement and Capital in an American Prison Town](#) by Heath Pearson
- [The Licit Life of Capitalism: US Oil in Equatorial Guinea](#) by Hannah Apple
- [Courting Desire: Litigating for Love in North India](#) by Rama Srinivasan

Course Structure and Grading

This course meets four times a week for approximately 1 hour and 50 minutes. For the first week of the course, readings and class lectures will focus on the foundational concepts, methods, and theories developed by anthropologists for studying law and justice cross-culturally. After week 1, each of the remaining weeks of the course will revolve around a different set of themes represented by each course text.

For each week, we will adhere to the following schedule:

- Monday: course lecture
- Tuesday: illustrating the concept
- Wednesday: course lecture
- Thursday: class activity/discussion

Your course grade will consist of the following:

Participation: 20%

Discussion Posts: 30%

Class Presentation: 50%

Participation and Discussion Posts

One-fifth of your course grade will be based on class attendance and your contributions to class discussion. Students are expected to have read the assigned materials and be ready to engage those materials with their classmates. While part of class time will be reserved for lecture, we will also make space to discuss the ideas and themes we encounter in the readings together. Class discussions, therefore, will serve multiple functions; it will be a chance for you to raise questions or seek clarification on issues that might have been confusing, it will be an opportunity for you to raise a point of criticism (negative or positive) towards the readings, and lastly, it will allow us to connect and apply the ideas encountered in the readings to other contexts and our own experiences.

30% of your grade will be based on discussion board posts. You will be required to submit **4 discussion posts** during the semester. Your posts should be viewed as an opportunity to reflect on the readings rather than a summary of the readings. In your posts you can raise questions, extend criticism, apply any concepts or ideas you encounter to new contexts, or highlight something in the readings that stand out to you or connect to your own experience. Posts should be **between 350 and 500 words** and are **due by Friday at 11:59pm at the end of each week**.

Class Presentation

Half of your class grade will be based on a class presentation where you work with others to lead class discussion about one of the books we read in the last three weeks of class.

Support and Accessibility Inside and Outside the Classroom

Students with disabilities and other hardships

If you are registered with Disability Support Services and require accommodation, I am happy to work with you and DSS staff to create a set of accommodations that best meets your needs.

I also recognize that students may experience hardships that fall outside of the disability category and I am happy to work with you to do my best to address those needs as well. The classroom should be a space for engagement, experimentation, creativity, and respect, but this can only happen when people feel included and when the classroom space is accessible and welcoming.

Finally, if for any reason you are experiencing a mental or physical health emergency, please prioritize your health needs over the course. I am happy to work with you and the university to come up with a makeup plan for missed assignments or absences.

Course Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to arrive on time and to remain until the class is dismissed. If you need to miss class for whatever reason, please notify me by email as soon as you can. You are allowed one absence without explanation and any additional unexcused absences will count against your participation grade.

Technology in the Classroom: During class, I ask that you please put away your phones and keep them on silent. The use of laptops is restricted to note taking only.

Academic Integrity: You are expected to abide the Georgetown University's standards set out in its honor system found here: <https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/system/policies/>.

Sexual Misconduct

Georgetown University and its faculty and staff are committed to supporting survivors and those impacted by sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, and stalking. Georgetown requires faculty members, unless otherwise designated as confidential, to report all disclosures of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator. If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a professor or staff member in or outside of the classroom (with the exception of disclosures in papers), that faculty or staff member must report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator, or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. The coordinator will, in turn, reach out to the student to provide support, resources, and the option to meet. Please note that the student is not required to meet with the Title IX coordinator and no action will be taken without the student's awareness. More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the Sexual Misconduct Website: <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/resourcecenter>.

If you would prefer to speak to someone confidentially, Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources that can provide support and assistance. These resources include:

- Health Education Services: Sexual Assault Response and Prevention: sarp@georgetown.edu
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS): 202.687.6985

Additional resources are included below:

- Georgetown Self-Care Resource Guide: <https://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/health-promotion/self-care/>
- Georgetown Wellness Wheel: <https://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/hoya-wellness-wheel/>
- Georgetown Guide to Recognizing Students in Distress: <https://studentaffairs.georgetown.edu/studentoutreach/facultystaffresources/>

Pregnancy Modifications and Adjustments

Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant students. At any point throughout their pregnancy students may request adjustments/modifications based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication or medical need. Students may also request accommodations following labor and delivery based on a complication or medical need.

To request pregnancy modifications, please complete the [SCS Pregnancy Modification Request Form](https://forms.gle/ZBfASxui7u13A8TU6): <https://forms.gle/ZBfASxui7u13A8TU6>

More information about pregnancy modifications can be found on the Title IX Georgetown University Website: <https://titleix.georgetown.edu/title-ix-pregnancy/student-pregnancy/>

Course Schedule

Week 1: Law as Culture

For our introductory week, I will provide an overview of the course syllabus and answer any questions you may have about the course. We will then turn to examining the syllabus as a document containing rules, expectations, and aspirations for the course.

Also in this week, we will set up two key themes of the course; first, in what ways is law distinct from or synonymous with justice? Rather than approach this question in a philosophical manner, we will use the social contexts from class readings to put forward some initial thoughts for how to answer this enduring question. Second, what does it mean to study law and justice anthropologically?

Readings:

- “An invitation to tea,” This American Life (podcast/radio show) available here: <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/752/an-invitation-to-tea>
- Laurence Rosen. *Law as Culture: An Invitation*, Introduction and chapter 1 - 3, p. 1 – 169
- Daniel Alarcón. “How do you define a gang member?” New York Times. May 27th, 2015. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/31/magazine/how-do-you-define-a-gang-member.html>

Class Schedule:

Monday July 8th Lecture: anthropologies of law and justice?

Tuesday July 9th Documentary and Discussion: “America’s Mass Incarceration Problem”

Wednesday July 10th Lecture: Law as Culture, limits and possibilities

Thursday July 11th Activity and Discussion + Class Presentation Assignment Instructions

Week 2: Critical Legal Anthropology

In this week, we will explore the development of different critical strains in legal anthropology. This approach draws from other disciplinary interventions (gender studies, critical race studies etc.) and is often connected to national and transnational social justice and human rights movements. It treats law as site of narrative making, technique, and political contestation. Critical ethnographies of law document its use as a subject making technology, a disciplining apparatus within the (neoliberal) state, an indeterminate and fluctuating marker of difference, and war and politics by other means (lawfare).

Reading:

- Translating Food Sovereignty: Cultivating Justice in an Age of Transnational Governance by Matthew Canfield

Class Schedule:

Monday Lecture: Sovereignty and Property

Tuesday Documentary and Discussion: Gather (2021)

Wednesday: Human Rights, Indigenous Rights, and The Problems with Rights

Thursday Workday (no class)

Week 3: Law and Economics

For this week, we will explore the intersection of law and markets in both local and global contexts. How does law facilitate certain kinds of economic relations while outlawing others? In global and transnational contexts, who are the actors that shape market relations, and in what ways do they make use of the law to carry out their interests.

Reading:

- The Licit Life of Capitalism: US Oil in Equatorial Guinea by Hannah Apple

Schedule:

Monday Lecture: Business and the Rule of Law

Tuesday Documentary and Discussion: The Panama Papers

Wednesday Lecture: Law and Political-Economy

Thursday Class Presentation

1. Week 5: Law and Intimacy

In this week, we will explore how law constructs interpersonal relationships, generates “public” and “private” spaces, and intervenes in our most intimate moments.

Reading:

- Courting Desire: Litigating for Love in North India by Rama Srinivasan

Schedule:

Monday Lecture: The Public/Private Distinction

Tuesday Documentary: “Dying to Divorce”

Wednesday Lecture: Whistleblowers

Thursday August 8th Class Presentation

2. Criminal Law/Justice

In this week, we will critically engage the concept of crime and explore the way societies identify and deal with crime.

Reading:

- Life Beside Bars: Confinement and Capital in an American Prison Town by Heath Pearson

Schedule:

Monday Lecture: Crime and Social Solidarity

Tuesday Documentary and Discussion: The Mauritanian
Wednesday Class Discussion
Thursday Guest Lecture