

Comparative Law
Fall 2025

CONTACT INFORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the field of comparative law by exploring how legal systems reflect and shape the societies in which they operate. Students examine major legal traditions—including civil, common, and indigenous law—and analyze how law functions in democratic, authoritarian, and post-colonial contexts. Through case studies, role play, and collaborative analysis, students investigate law as a social construct and develop foundational skills in legal reasoning, comparative analysis, and academic research. Comparative case studies such as hate speech regulation and legal responses to climate change will help students apply theoretical frameworks to real-world legal challenges and deepen their understanding of law's role across jurisdictions and cultures.

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Think Critically About Law

- a. Break down complex legal ideas into understandable parts
- b. Judge the quality and reliability of legal sources
- c. Draw your own conclusions based on evidence
- d. Clearly explain your reasoning in writing or discussion
- e. Reflect on your own assumptions and how they shape your understanding of law

2. Understand Law as a Social Construct

- a. Explore how cultural, historical, political, and economic factors influence legal systems
- b. Recognize that laws reflect the values and power structures of different societies
- c. Compare how different countries or communities create and apply laws
- d. Reflect on your own views about what law is and how it works
- e. Use real-world examples to explain how law both shapes and is shaped by society

3. Use Comparative Analysis

- a. Identify key similarities and differences between legal systems
- b. Use clear criteria—like legal traditions, institutions, or procedures—to guide your comparisons
- c. Understand why we compare laws and what we can learn from doing so
- d. Make fair and balanced comparisons without assuming one system is better than another
- e. Apply comparative methods to real-world legal issues

4. Read Academic & Legal Works

- a. Identify key arguments, concepts, and structures in legal and scholarly writing
- b. Read complex texts critically and ask thoughtful questions
- c. Understand the purpose, audience, and assumptions behind a text
- d. Summarize, interpret, and respond to what you've read

- e. Use readings to support your own ideas in writing and discussion

5. Do Academic Research

- a. Find reliable academic and legal sources using research tools
- b. Ask focused research questions and plan your research
- c. Evaluate the credibility and relevance of sources
- d. Organize your findings to support your arguments
- e. Cite your sources properly using academic styles

6. Write Succinctly and Well

- a. Express complex ideas clearly and simply
- b. Organize your writing with logical structure and strong arguments
- c. Avoid unnecessary jargon or repetition
- d. Edit and revise your work for clarity and flow
- e. Use correct grammar, punctuation, and academic style

7. Communicate and Synthesize Legal Ideas

- a. Present complex legal comparisons clearly and persuasively to a general audience
- b. Lead thoughtful discussions that connect individual research to course themes
- c. Respond to questions and engage with diverse perspectives
- d. Use visual or verbal tools to support your argument effectively
- e. Reflect on how your work contributes to broader conversations about law and society

GRADING RUBRIC

PERCENT OF GRADE	
Semester long project, parts:	50 %
- Proposal	
- Annotated bibliography	
- Literature review	
- Final paper	
Class presentation	10 %
Online and in class participation	20 %
Reflection exercises	20 %

LETTER GRADE CONVERSION SCALE			
A	93-100 %	C	73-76 %
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	0-59

SCHEDULE OF TESTS AND ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

ASSESSMENT	DUE DATE <i>Note: All assignments must be submitted through Brightspace BEFORE Class</i>
Proposal of semester long comparative research	Due Oct 6
Annotated bibliography- Country Case 1	Due Oct 27
Literature Review – Country Case 2	Due Nov 13

Comparative Synthesis Activity	Due Nov 20
Draft of final for peer review	Dec 11
Final paper	Due Dec 15
Class presentation	Due Dec 11
Reflection exercises	1 st Due date Sep 29 2 nd Due date Dec 04

ASSESSMENT DETAILS

Final Comparative Legal Analysis Paper

For the final assignment, students will write a comparative paper that explores a legal question either *across time* or *across jurisdictions*. This could involve, for example, comparing civil rights cases before and after landmark legislation (temporal comparison), or analyzing how freedom of speech is treated in two different countries (cross-national comparison).

The final project will be completed in **five stages**:

1. **Proposal**

Submit a brief proposal outlining:

- The legal question
- The two cases or jurisdictions being compared
- The type of comparison (e.g., most similar or most different)
- A short reflection on your research design

2. **Annotated Bibliography (Case 1)**

Conduct initial research and submit an annotated bibliography focused on the first case or jurisdiction.

3. **Literature Review (Case 2)**

Follow up with a literature review centered on the second case or jurisdiction.

4. **Comparative Synthesis Activity**

The Comparative Synthesis is a **draft exercise** to help you move from research to analysis for your final paper. You will identify key themes across your sources and begin comparing legal systems, cases, or issues. This draft will be used in **writer-led peer review** during class on Nov 20. **Grading:** Complete/Incomplete. To receive credit, you must bring a full draft (at least 2–3 pages of comparative writing) and participate actively in peer review. The draft itself is not graded for quality; it is a process step toward the final paper.

5. **Draft Final Paper for Peer Review (Complete/Incomplete)**

Due: Dec 11 (bring to class)

The Draft Final Paper is your near-complete version of the final research paper. It should include an introduction, argument/thesis, comparative analysis, and preliminary conclusion, even if not fully polished.

This draft will be the basis of our peer review workshop on Dec 11, where you will give and receive feedback to strengthen your final submission.

Grading: Complete/Incomplete. To receive credit, you must bring a full draft (at least 8–10 pages) and engage actively in peer review. The draft itself will not be graded for quality but is required to complete the course.

6. **Final Paper**

Synthesize your research into a comparative analysis that clearly articulates the legal question, explains the rationale for the comparison, and draws meaningful conclusions from the similarities and differences observed.

Supports Learning Objectives:

- #1 Think Critically About Law
- #2 Understand Law as a Social Construct
- #3 Use Comparative Analysis
- #4 Read Academic & Legal Works
- #5 Do Academic Research
- #6 Write Succinctly and Well
- #7 Communicate and Synthesize Legal Ideas

Generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, DALL·E) may be used only for supportive tasks such as proofreading or formatting citations. You may not use AI tools to generate ideas, conduct research, or write any part of your final project—including the proposal, annotated bibliography, literature review, synthesis memo, or final paper.

This restriction is in place because the final project is carefully scaffolded to help you build core academic skills and meet the course’s learning objectives. Using AI to bypass these steps undermines your learning and violates the spirit of the course.

If you use AI tools for permitted tasks, you must include a brief disclosure in your submission (e.g., “I used Copilot to check grammar in my final draft”).

Unauthorized or undisclosed use of AI tools will be treated as a potential violation of the Dickinson College Code of Academic Integrity

In-Class Presentation (Separate Grade)

Each student will deliver a brief in-class presentation of their comparative analysis. The presentation should:

- Clearly state the legal question and the cases/jurisdictions being compared
- Explain the rationale for the design of comparison (most similar or most different)
- Highlight key findings and insights from the research
- Include a discussion section that actively engages the class by connecting the comparison to course themes, readings, or debates
- Encourage questions and dialogue with peers

This is an opportunity to share your work, receive feedback, and demonstrate your ability to communicate complex legal ideas clearly and persuasively

Supports Objectives:

- #1 Think Critically About Law – Explaining and defending their analysis.
- #2 Understand Law as a Social Construct – Connecting their comparison to course themes.
- #3 Use Comparative Analysis – Communicating the logic and value of their comparison.
- #7 Communicate and Synthesize Legal Ideas – Presenting clearly, leading discussion, and engaging peers.

Participation

Participation in class discussions and activities and online discussions will count towards your final grade. I will have a mid-semester and a second half participation grade, which together will sum towards your final grade

Includes active engagement in both in-class and online discussions. Students are expected to:

- Contribute thoughtfully to class conversations
- Respond respectfully to peers
- Demonstrate familiarity with reading and course materials
- Ask questions that deepen discussion.

Note that if you have unexcused absences, these will hurt your participation grade.

Supports Objectives:

- #1 Think Critically About Law
- #2 Understand Law as a Social Construct
- #4 Read Academic & Legal Works
- #7 Communicate and Synthesize Legal Ideas

Reflection Assignments

Students will complete periodic **reflection assignments** in response to prompts related to course themes, readings, films, and other materials. These reflections are designed to help students connect course content to broader legal, cultural, and personal contexts.

Reflections may take a variety of formats, including:

- Short written essays or journal entries
- Audio or video recordings
- Visual or multimedia projects (e.g., infographics, photo essays, narrated slides)
- Reflection prompts may ask students to:
 - Analyze a legal theme or issue presented in a film or documentary
 - Connect course readings to current events or personal experiences
 - Explore how different media portray law, justice, or legal institutions
 - Reflect on how their understanding of law is evolving over time

Supports Objectives:

- #1 Think Critically About Law
- #2 Understand Law as a Social Construct
- #4 Read Academic & Legal Works

- #6 Write Succinctly and Well (*when written*)
- #7 Communicate and Synthesize Legal Ideas (*especially for multimedia formats*)

Reflection Assignment #1: *Denial*

Due: Monday, September 29 (submit via Brightspace before class)

Prompt

In *Denial*, we see how legal systems shape public memory, define harm, and determine historical truth. Drawing on the film, our class discussion, and the assigned readings on comparative hate speech regulation, respond to the following:

- **Legal Systems & Jurisdiction**
Why was this case tried in the UK rather than the US? What does this reveal about differences in legal traditions and approaches to free speech and defamation?
- **Comparative Insight**
How might the case have unfolded differently in a U.S. courtroom? Use examples from the hate speech readings (e.g., Bleich, Bennhold, Johnson, Laub) to support your analysis.
- **Personal Reflection**
What assumptions did you bring into the film about law, justice, or the U.S. and UK legal systems—and how were they challenged or reinforced?

AI Use Policy

Because this is a personal reflection assignment, **you may not use generative AI tools** (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, DALL-E) to generate ideas, draft content, or structure your response. This includes both written and multimedia formats.

The purpose of this assignment is to develop your own voice and perspective. Unauthorized or undisclosed use of AI tools will be treated as a potential violation of the Dickinson College Code of Academic Integrity.

Reflection Assignment #2: *Youth Climate Litigation in Comparative Perspective*

Due Date: Thursday, December 4

Submission Options:

Choose the format that best suits your learning style:

- Written reflection (500–700 words)
- Audio or video journal (3–5 minutes)
- Visual project (e.g., infographic, narrated slides, photo essay)

Prompt:

After watching *Yumi* and *Youth v. Gov*, reflect on how youth are using legal systems to pursue climate justice. What do these case studies reveal about the role of law as a tool of activism? How do they shape your own perspective on law's capacity—and limitations—in addressing global challenges?

Your response should:

- Compare the legal strategies and contexts of the two cases
- Analyze how courts and governments responded
- Reflect on your own view of law's potential to drive systemic change

AI Use Policy:

You may not use generative AI tools to generate ideas, draft content, or structure your response. Disclosure required for permitted uses (e.g., grammar check).

COURSE MODULES

Module 1: Introduction to Comparative Law and the Comparative method

What is law and what does it mean to compare law?

Module 2: Law in Democracies

What are key legal traditions and what are interesting points of convergence and divergence?

Module 3: Law in Autocracies and Post-Colonial Societies

What role does law play in non-democratic societies?

What role does law play in societies, where tradition and custom may be at odds with the legal system

Module 4: International Law, Human Rights, and Global Challenges

What are the foundations of international law, and where do its limits appear most clearly?

How do domestic and international legal struggles interact in contexts like migration, displacement, and colonial legacies?

How is international law being used, contested, and reimagined in response to global challenges such as border control and climate change?

COURSE SCHEDULE

Module 1		
Week 1: Introduction		
M	1-Sep	<p>Syllabus review</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Syllabus – be prepared for quiz Samuel, S. (2023, April 17). <i>Generative AI is cool, but let's not forget its human and environmental costs</i>. Ars Technica. https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2023/04/generative-ai-is-cool-but-lets-not-forget-its-human-and-environmental-costs/
TH	4-Sep	<p>Foundations: Political Discussion in an Age of Political polarization</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harvard Educational Guide “Calling In and Calling Out” Guide https://edib.harvard.edu/files/dib/files/calling_in_and_calling_out_guide_v4.pdf Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens (2013). “From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces: A New Way to Frame Dialogue around Diversity and Social Justice.” <i>The Art of Effective Facilitation</i>. Stylus Publishing. Michel Martin (2018). “Politics, Facts and Civility: A Lesson in Engaging in Discourse.” <i>NPR All Things Considered</i>. October 27. Ibram X. Kendi (2018). “More Devoted to Order Than to Justice.” <i>The Atlantic</i>. June 28. <p>Recommended readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christopher F. Zurn (2013). “Political Civility: Another Illusionistic Ideal.” <i>Public Affairs Quarterly</i>. 27.4: 341-368
Week 2		
M	8-Sep	<p>Foundations: What is Comparative Law?</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Siems, M. (2022). <i>Comparative law</i> (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press. pp. 1–6. Lostri, E., Evers, A., & Benizri, I. (Hosts). (2023, October 23). <i>The Lawfare Podcast: Comparing approaches to AI regulation</i> [Audio podcast episode]. In <i>The Lawfare Podcast</i>. The Lawfare Institute. https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/the-lawfare-podcast-comparing-approaches-to-ai-regulation-with-arianna-evers-and-itsiq-benizri
TH	11-Sep	<p>Law in Democracies: Civil vs Common 1 : British and US common law</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Siems, M. (2022). Introduction; and Common law and civil law. In <i>Comparative law</i> (3rd ed., 50–81). Cambridge University Press.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shapiro, S. J. (1988). Comparing Free Speech: United States v. United Kingdom. <i>Law F.</i>, 19, 17. <i>New York Times Co. v. Sullivan</i>, 376 U.S. 254 (1964), pp. 265–267, 269–271, 279–280, 283–284, 287–289 <i>Reynolds v. Times Newspapers Ltd.</i>, [2001] 2 AC 127, paras. 1–5, 13–18, 41–47, 60, 177–178 <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descheemaeker, Eric. "'A man must take care not to defame his neighbour': the origins and significance of the defence of responsible publication." <i>The UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND LAW JOURNAL</i> 34.2 (2015): 239-264. Glenn, H. P. (2014). A common law tradition: The ethic of adjudication. In <i>Legal traditions of the world: Sustainable diversity in law</i> (5th ed., pp. 236–286). Oxford University Press.
Week 3		
M	15 - Sep	<p>Law in Democracies: Civil vs Common 1 : The Civil tradition</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merryman, J. H., & Pérez-Perdomo, R. (2007). I. Two legal traditions. & II. Roman civil law, canon law, and commercial law. In <i>The Civil Law Tradition: An Introduction to the Legal Systems of Europe and Latin America</i> (4th ed., pp. 6–14). Stanford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503607552-004 (available as E book via library) Legal English. (2023, August 15). <i>Understanding the differences: Common law vs. civil law</i> [Audio podcast episode]. 4 Legal English Podcast. https://4legalenglish.com/podcasts/podcast-043/
TH	18- Sep	<p>Case study: Comparative Hate Speech</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bleich, Erik. Freedom of Expression versus Racist Hate Speech: Explaining Differences Between High Court Regulations in the USA and Europe. <i>Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies</i> (2013). DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2013.851476 Bennhold, Katrin. "Germany Acts to Tame Facebook, Learning from Its Own History of Hate." <i>The New York Times</i>, May 19, 2018. Johnson, Fay M. "Ye and the Limits of Free Speech Online." <i>The New York Times</i>, February 19, 2025. Laub, Zachary. "Hate Speech on Social Media: Global Comparisons." <i>Council on Foreign Relations</i>, June 7, 2019.
Week 4		

M	22-Sep	Film: <i>Denial</i> (2016) instead of class
TH	25-Sep	Synthesis Workshop: Law, Memory & Harm Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Douglas, L. (2001). Introduction. In L. Douglas, <i>The memory of judgment: Making law and history in the trials of the Holocaust</i> (pp. 1–7). Yale University Press. (available as E book)
Week 5		
M	29-Sep	Assignment: Reflection #1 Due (before class) Foundations: The Comparative Method Find a different reading for next time! Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nelken, David. "Comparing Legal Cultures." In <i>The Blackwell Companion to Law and Society</i>, pp. 113–127.
TH	2-Oct	Law in Democracies: Comparative Constitutionalism Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jackson, V. C., & Tushnet, M. (2014). Introduction: Reproductive rights and comparative constitutional law. In <i>Comparative constitutional law</i> (3rd ed., pp. 1–158). Foundation Press.. Arablouei, R. (Host, Producer), & Randa. (Host, Producer). (n.d.). <i>After Roe: A New Battlefield</i> [Audio podcast episode]. In <i>Throughline</i>. NPR Podcasts. Longoria, J. (Host). (n.d.). Part 2: If Not Viability, Then What? (Season 4, Episode 6) [Audio podcast episode]. In <i>More Perfect Podcast</i>. WNYC Studios. Recommended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longoria, J. (Host). (n.d.). Part 1: The Viability Line (Season 4, Episode 5) [Audio podcast episode]. In <i>More Perfect Podcast</i>. WNYC Studios.
Week 6		
M	6-Oct	Assignment: Proposal Due (before class) In class Research workshop No readings, but read ahead please
TH	9-Oct	Law in Democracies: Law & Democratic Backsliding Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council on Foreign Relations. (2023, May 5). <i>Laws, Norms, and Democratic Backsliding</i>. CFR Education. https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/laws-norms-and-democratic-backsliding Garcia-Holgado, B. (2024). <i>Overruling the executive: Judicial strategies to resist democratic erosion</i>. <i>Journal of Law and Courts</i>. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-law-and-

		<p>courts/article/overruling-the-executive-judicial-strategies-to-resist-democratic-erosion/D94BE5ECB9C0636C50295A290CCD9DD2?utm_source=chatgpt.com</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer Jurists, Justice for the Rule of Law, & Swiss Institute for the Judiciary. (2025, June 7). <i>Judges as the enemy – Politicized justice</i> (Season 1, Episode 1) [Audio podcast episode]. In <i>Backsliding Democracies – The Role of the Judiciary</i>. Acast. https://shows.acast.com/backsliding-democracies-the-role-of-the-judiciary/episodes/judges-as-the-enemy-politicized-justice Huq, A. Z., & Ginsburg, T. (2023). The Comparative Constitutional of Democratic Backsliding: A Report on the State of the Field. <i>Droit Public Comparé</i>, (1). https://publications-prairial.fr/droit-public-compare/index.php?id=88 <p>Recommended material:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finkel, S. E. (Host). (2024, July 3). <i>Backsliding Democracies: The Role of the Judiciary</i> [Audio podcast episode]. In <i>Backsliding Democracies: The Role of the Judiciary</i>. Acast. https://shows.acast.com/backsliding-democracies-the-role-of-the-judiciary Kukec, M., Simon, J. & Stenberg, M. Rule of law backsliding across regime types: a comparative analysis of the role of party cohesion in shaping backsliding dynamics. <i>Z Vgl Polit Wiss</i> (2025). https://doi.org/10.1007/s12286-025-00645-y
Week 7		
M	13-Oct	Brazil Case study. Readings TBD guest lecture from Diego
		Law in Autocracies: Authoritarian use of law
		<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ginsburg, Tom. "How Authoritarians Use International Law." <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 31.4 (2020): 44-58. Next time move that to recommended Ginsburg, T., & Moustafa, T. (2008). Introduction: The functions of courts in authoritarian politics. <i>Rule by law: The politics of courts in authoritarian regimes</i>, 1-22.
TH	16-Oct	<p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widner, J., & Scher, D. (2008). Building judicial independence in semi-democracies: Uganda and Zimbabwe. In <i>Rule by Law: The Politics of Courts in Authoritarian Regimes</i> (pp. 235-260). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511814822.010 American Society of International Law. (n.d.). Episode 20: Authoritarian international law? <i>ASIL / International Law Behind the Headlines</i> [Audio podcast episode]. SoundCloud. https://soundcloud.com/americansocietyofinternationallaw/episode-20-authoritarian-international-law
Week 8		
M	20-Oct	<i>Mid-term Pause</i>
		Law in Autocracies: China case study
TH	23-Oct	<p>Guest Lecture – Jessica Teets</p> <p>Readings:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ling Li, The Chinese Communist Party and People's Courts: Judicial Dependence in China, 64 AM. J. COMP. L. 37, <u>59-72</u> (2016); <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus on: ○ Introduction and Conclusion • Paul Gewirtz, <i>What China Means by 'Rule of Law'?</i>, NY TIMES (Oct. 19, 2014). • Wang, Y. (2024). The Legality Trap: Legal Cooptation Under Authoritarianism. <i>American Journal of Comparative Law</i> (forthcoming). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus on: ○ Introduction (pp. 1–3) ○ “Legal Cooptation Under Authoritarianism” (pp. 3–6) ○ “Discussion: The Legality Trap and Its Shortcomings” (pp. 30–32).
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Week 9		
M	27-Oct	<p>Assignment: Annotated Bibliography Due</p> <p>Law in Post-Colonial Contexts – Legal Pluralism Foundations</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferrari, Silvio. "Religious rules and legal pluralism: An Introduction." <i>Religious Rules, State Law, and Normative Pluralism-A Comparative Overview</i>. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016. 1-25. pp. 1–10 • Tamanaha, Brian Z., 'Postcolonial Legal Pluralism', <i>Legal Pluralism Explained: History, Theory, Consequences</i> (New York, 2021; online edn, Oxford Academic, 18 Mar. 2021), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190861551.003.0003, accessed 22 Aug. 2025.
TH	30-Oct	<p>Indigenous Law in Settler-Colonial Context</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Napoleon, V. (2013). Thinking About Indigenous Legal Orders. In: Provost, R., Sheppard, C. (eds) <i>Dialogues on Human Rights and Legal Pluralism</i>. Ius Gentium: <i>Comparative Perspectives on Law and Justice</i>, vol 17. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4710-4_11 • “The Indian Question in the United States” in Mamdani, M. (2020). <i>Neither settler nor native</i>. Harvard University Press. <p>Too much of Mamdani. Select pages</p>
Week 10		
M	3-Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crash Course: Native American History – “Assimilation and Allotment.” YouTube (13 min). Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icqSBkFJNGU • Hoxie, F. E. (2001). <i>A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920</i>. Read Chapter 6 – “Schools for a Dependent People” (pp. 190–206).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruyneel, K. (2007). <i>The Third Space of Sovereignty</i>. Read pp. 97–111 of Chapter 4 – “Indigenous Politics and the ‘Gift’ of U.S. Citizenship” •
TH	6-Nov	<p>Foundations of International Law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council on Foreign Relations. (2023, July 25). <i>What is international law?</i> CFR Education. https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/what-international-law • Read only Part III: Transnational Legal Process. in Koh, H. H. (1996). “Why Do Nations Obey International Law?” <i>Nebraska Law Review</i>, 75, 181. <p>Split Readings (assigned in advance by team):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Sikkink: Sikkink, K. (2011). <i>The Justice Cascade: How Human Rights Prosecutions Are Changing World Politics</i>. Princeton University Press. Chapter 1 (“The Emergence of Individual Accountability for Human Rights Violations”). • Team HRW: Human Rights Watch. (2011). <i>The Legacy of Torture in the War on Terror</i>.
Week 11		
M	10-Nov	<p>When the Local Goes Global: Diego Garcia and the International Legal Order</p> <p>Case Study: Diego Garcia – Indigenous Rights & International Law</p> <p>Readings TBD</p>
TH	13-Nov	<p>Assignment: Literature Review Due</p> <p>International Human Rights Law Foundations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) → Arts. 1–2 (equality/non-discrimination), 13 (movement), 25 (standard of living). • International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) → Arts. 6 (right to life), 12 (freedom of movement), 14 (fair trial). • 1951 Refugee Convention → Arts. 1 (definition of refugee), 31 (non-penalization for irregular entry), 33 (non-refoulement). • 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees → Preamble + note on removing geographic/temporal limits. • (Optional, soft law) Global Compact on Refugees (2018) → Preamble & guiding principles. • Okedele, P. O., Aziza, O. R., Oduro, P., & Ishola, A. O. (2024). Human rights, climate justice, and environmental law: Bridging international legal standards for social equity. <i>Human Rights</i>, 20(12), 232-241.
Week 12		

M	17-Nov	Border Externalization & Migration Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FitzGerald, D. S. (2019). Chapter 1: The catch-22 of asylum policy. In <i>Refuge beyond reach: How rich democracies repel asylum seekers</i> (pp. 80–93). Oxford University Press. Schmid, L. (2022). Saving migrants' basic human rights from sovereign rule. <i>American Political Science Review</i>, 116(3), 954-967. Read Abstract Introduction, Basic Human Rights, Robustness, And The Reformability Of Immigration Enforcement, and Conclusion Puggioni, R. (2018). Border politics, right to life and acts of dissensus: voices from the Lampedusa borderland. In <i>The Power of Human Rights/The Human Rights of Power</i> (pp. 113-127). Routledge. Read Abstract Introduction, Contextualizing the Protests (Mare Nostrum), The Human Cost and Local Response in Lampedusa, Connecting Local Protests to Broader Theoretical and Political Critiques, Concluding Remarks
TH	20-Nov	Comparative Synthesis Due Writer-led peer writing workshop
Week 13		
M	24-Nov	No class- Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> YOUTH v GOV the documentary Please note: The provided excerpts from "YOUTH v GOV the documentary" do not explicitly state the director or a specific release year for the film itself. The lawsuit it covers began in 2015. Based on the available information in the source, a general citation would be: <i>YOUTH v GOV</i>. (n.d.). [Film]. Available on Netflix. YUMI – The whole World – A documentary about bringing the world's biggest problem to the world's highest court Golenko, F. (Director). (2025). <i>YUMI – The whole World: A documentary about bringing the world's biggest problem to the world's highest court</i> [Film]. MSZ Production & Consulting; Südwestrundfunk; Filmakademie BW
TH	27-Nov	<i>Thanksgiving Vacation</i>
Week 14		
M	1-Dec	Youth Climate Litigation Across Borders Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Okedele, P. O., Aziza, O. R., Oduro, P., & Ishola, A. O. (2024). Climate change litigation as a tool for global environmental policy reform: A comparative study of international case law. <i>Open Access Research Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies</i>, 8(2), 104–115. https://doi.org/10.53022/oarjms.2024.8.2.0070 Recommended:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global Trends in Climate Change Litigation: 2025 Snapshot Setzer, J., & Higham, C. (2025). <i>Global trends in climate change litigation: 2025 snapshot</i>. Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science. https://doi.org/10.21953/LSE.LH46LE9Y8SGI Review Climate Change Litigation (Peel & Osofsky, 2020) Peel, J., & Osofsky, H. M. (2020). Climate Change Litigation. <i>Annual Review of Law and Social Science</i>, 16, 21–38. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-022420-122936
TH	4-Dec	<p>Climate Reflection Due</p> <p>Reflections on Comparative Law: Pluralism, Power, and Global Challenges</p> <p>Instead of reading, bring a handwritten, 1-2 page reflection to class. This is for in-class use and won't be graded for style or grammar. It will count towards your participation grade. The goal is to capture your big-picture takeaways before we synthesize as a group. Topics to reflect on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "What is one key insight about comparative law you're taking from this course?" "How has your understanding of law as a social construct changed?"
Week 15		
M	8-Dec	Presentations
TH	11-Dec	Draft Final Paper for Peer Review
Final Paper		
M	15-Dec	Final Paper

CLASS ACCESSIBILITY

Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Dickinson values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded equitable access to participate in all learning experiences. If you have (or think you may have) a learning difference or a disability – including a mental health, medical, or physical impairment – that would hinder your access to learning or demonstrating knowledge in this class, please contact Access and Disability Services (ADS). They will confidentially explain the accommodation request process and the type of documentation needed to determine your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. To learn more about available supports, go to www.dickinson.edu/ADS, email access@dickinson.edu, call (717) 245-1734, or go to the ADS office in Room 005 of Old West, Lower Level (aka "the OWLL").

If you've already been granted accommodations at Dickinson, please follow the guidance at www.dickinson.edu/AccessPlan for disclosing the accommodations for which you are eligible and scheduling a meeting with me as soon as possible so that we can discuss your accommodations and finalize your Access Plan. If you will be using any test-taking accommodations in this class, enter all test dates into your Access Plan before our meeting.

Physical Access (to This Class / to My Office)

This class meets in **Denny Hall 311**, and my office is in **Denny 013**. Denny Hall has an elevator, to the left of the building to enter the building and then in the left half of the building. If you require the use of an elevator to access either my office or the classroom, please let me know. In the event of an elevator malfunction, we will be notified by email, and I will consult with the Academic Development Services (ADS) to identify alternative options for that day.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Email Policy: I will be checking my email in regular increments Monday through Friday between 9am and 5pm. I will not be responding to students' questions outside these hours.

Attendance:

Class attendance will be part of your participation grade. If you're unable to attend class due to illness or extenuating circumstances, please notify me in advance or within 24 hours. I will alert the [CARE Team](#) and your advisor of multiple or extended absences at my discretion.

Syllabus Changes

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice. I will inform you of any changes via either the lecture or email and Brightspace. Make sure to check your university-supplied email regularly. You are accountable for all such communications

Laptops and Smartphones in the classroom:

Scientific studies have shown that laptops increase multitasking, decrease you and your fellow cohort member's attention, and negatively impact your ability to retain the material and your course performance. That said, many of us use laptops for notetaking. So, *you may use laptops may be used for notetaking or to refer to readings*. Even so, I want to encourage you to take notes by hand as much as possible, and to close the screens during discussions.

No Wi-Fi use in class. It is easy for me to see, whether you are browsing the internet, or whether you are engaged in class, and taking notes. Scrolling, browsing, chatting – all of these will hurt your participation grade.

Unless you have extenuating family circumstances, *phones must be on silent during class*.

Recording Class: This class may be recorded for accommodation purposes. If a student has that accommodation, the entire class will be informed that classes will be recorded.

Withdrawal: The last day to withdraw with a "W" grade is Tuesday, November 26, 2025.

Policy on the Use of Generative AI Tools in This Course

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools—software that creates new text, images, code, audio, video, and other content—are now widely accessible. Examples include ChatGPT for text generation and DALL-E for image creation. This policy applies to all such tools, including any new ones released during our semester together.

You **may** use generative AI tools for assignments in this course, but only **within the following limitations**:

✓ Permitted Uses (Supportive, Not Substitutive)

You may use generative AI tools to **enhance your own original work**, such as:

- Proofreading or improving grammar and clarity in your writing
- Reformatting or cleaning up bibliographies and citations
- Clarifying assignment instructions

These uses are intended to **support your learning and skill development**, not replace it.

✗ Prohibited Uses (Substituting for Your Thinking)

You may **not** use generative AI tools to:

- Generate ideas, outlines, or full drafts of your assignments
- Write essays, responses, or reflections on your behalf
- Fabricate data, sources, or citations
- Complete assignments in a way that bypasses the learning process

Using AI in these ways undermines your academic growth and violates the spirit of this course.

 Disclosure Requirement

If you use a generative AI tool, you must include a brief note in your submission describing:

- Which tool(s) you used
- How you used them (e.g., "I used ChatGPT to check grammar in my final draft")

Accountability and Integrity

You are fully responsible for the **accuracy, originality, and integrity** of your work.

Generative AI tools:

- May produce inaccurate or misleading information
- Are often trained on outdated or biased datasets
- May unintentionally generate plagiarized or copyrighted content

Privacy

You have access to Microsoft Copilot through your Dickinson College email account. When you use Copilot while signed in with your Dickinson credentials:

- Your data is not used to train the AI model
- Your activity remains private and secure within the institution's Microsoft environment

Unauthorized or undisclosed use of AI tools will be treated as a potential violation of the **Dickinson College Code of Academic Integrity**.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity will be taken very seriously in this course. Students who violate College rules on scholastic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action, which includes the possible failure of the course and/or dismissal from the College. For a laughably brief take on this complicated issue, follow these guidelines:

1. Do your own work; clear any collaborations ahead of time and give full credit;
2. Cite your sources fully and explicitly; and
3. For quotations, use quotation marks and cite fully; for summary or paraphrase, cite fully and explicitly at the end of the relevant paragraph or sentence.

For further details, please read carefully and be familiar with the Community Standards on the Dickinson College website:

https://www.dickinson.edu/info/20273/dean_of_students/867/community_standards

The Dickinson College Plagiarism Policy:

To plagiarize is to use without proper citation or acknowledgment the words, ideas or original research of another. Whenever one relies on someone else for phraseology, even for only two or three words, one must acknowledge indebtedness by using quotation marks and giving the source, either in the text or in a footnote. When one borrows facts which are not matters of general knowledge--including all statistics--one must indicate one's indebtedness in the text or footnote. When one borrows an idea or the logic of an agreement, one must acknowledge indebtedness either in a footnote or in the text. When in doubt--footnote.

Most plagiarism is unintentional, the result of ignorance or inaccurate notetaking. Your paper, however, cannot be evaluated by guesses about your intention; it can only be evaluated as it exists. Whether plagiarism is intentional or inadvertent, the penalty is severe. Read the discussion and examples carefully; if you have questions, consult your instructor.

RESOURCES

- [Academic Calendar \(2024-2025\)](#)
- [Academic Technology](#)
- [Advising, Internships, and Career Center](#)
- [BERT: Bias Education and Response Team](#)
- [CARE Team](#)
- [Center for Spirituality and Social Justice](#)
- [Department of Public Safety](#)
- [Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\)](#)
- [Final Exam Schedule \(Fall 2024\)](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Center](#)
- [Peer Advising](#)
- [Peer Tutoring](#)
- [Popel Shaw Center for Race and Ethnicity](#)
- [Quantitative Reasoning Center](#)

- [Registrar's Office and Forms](#)
- [SOAR: Strategies, Organization, and Achievement Resources](#)
- [Technology Services](#)
- [Waidner-Spahr Library](#)
- [Wellness Center](#)
- [Women's and Gender Resource Center](#)
- [Writing Center](#)

SOAR: Academic Success Support and More

Students can find a wealth of strategic academic success tools (like weekly planners, semester calendars, and much more) by going online to www.dickinson.edu/SOAR or to Old West's Lower Level (aka "the OWLL"). SOAR stands for **S**trategies, **O**rganization, & **A**chievement **R**esources, and there you'll find apps, tips, and other resources related to organization, study skills, memory strategies, note-taking, test-taking, etc. You'll find strategies for managing your time and well-being, as well as a schedule of academic success workshops offered throughout the semester. If you'd like to attend a workshop or request one-on-one assistance with developing a strategy for a manageable and academically successful semester, email your availability to SOAR@dickinson.edu.