

# Legal Studies

## Contact Information

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Many professionals need a comprehensive understanding of the legal system. The Master of Arts in Legal Studies addresses these needs within the framework of an interdisciplinary liberal arts education.

M.A. students work with professors, not teaching assistants. We offer small class sizes to facilitate learning. M.A. students tailor their degrees to suit their needs and interests.

Both the blended and the online Master of Arts Degree in Legal Studies degrees allow students to gain professional skills, study the role of law in American society, and take advantage of clinical education opportunities if desired. The Legal Studies M.A. provides students with a broad general understanding of the legal system, how it works, how it interrelates with societal change, and how individuals can assert their rights within the legal system.

The degree is particularly suited to students in professions where practical knowledge of the law and legal system is required, including those who work in legal compliance; participate in judicial processes; engage in legal research or analysis; or are in one of the many fields in which knowledge of the law and legal systems is beneficial, including public sector, nonprofit, legislative, and business fields. It is also helpful for those who practice law in another country and are required to interact with U.S. lawyers and businesses but do not need a U.S. law degree.

The curriculum seeks to develop students' professional and scholarly abilities with a view to the kinds of skills they will need in law-related careers or more advanced studies. Particular emphasis is placed on analytical thinking, research, and writing skills. Online students have the same curriculum and instructors as on-campus students.

## The Master's Degree

The Master of Arts program in Legal Studies is designed to present the master's candidate with an interdisciplinary course of study in public law, emphasizing law as a social phenomenon and a technical body of rules. It is a rigorous course of study designed to develop the candidate's critical understanding of the legal system and its role in public policy and within society more generally. It emphasizes analytical and conceptual thinking, legal and scholarly research and writing, substantive areas of the law, ethical and public interest concerns, public policy advocacy skills, and the role of law in society.

## Advising

Applicants should consult the Department Chair and/or the Legal Studies Program Coordinator for preliminary advising. Students admitted to the program will be assigned a faculty advisor who will be identified in the acceptance letter. If the advisor is not available for any reason, the student may contact the Department Chair.

Pre-registration advising is important because some legal studies courses must be taken sequentially, and required courses are not offered every semester. Course requirements and sequences are available on the LES website.

## Clinical Education

The clinical education experience provides students with the skills necessary to be successful in a legal environment. Master's candidates may earn up to four hours of clinical education credits, which will be applied toward LES elective credit.

Many organizations sponsor paid and unpaid interns. Placement options include courts, administrative agencies, state and federal attorneys' offices, legal aid offices, private law firms, nonprofit organizations, and political offices. Students in the UIS Graduate Public Service Internship Program (GPSI) may count the GPSI Seminar course towards their non-LES electives. Similarly, students in the Illinois Legislative Staff Internship Program (ILSIP) may count the ILSIP: Academic Seminar towards their non-LES electives.

## Grading Policy

Students must maintain a B (3.0) or higher average within the program and must earn a B (3.0) or better in all LES core courses (grades of B- or lower are not accepted). Clinical education courses and tutorials are graded on a credit/no credit (CR/NC) basis. Campus policy on Master's Degree grades can be found in Grades Acceptable Toward Master's Degrees.

## Program Learning Outcomes

The objectives and outcomes for the M.A. graduate are to:

1. Outline the functional structure and operation of the American legal system.
2. Develop the skills necessary to conduct and critique legal and sociological research.
3. Use social and legal theories to explain legal phenomena.
4. Effectively critique and construct legal arguments.
5. Develop expository and advocacy-oriented writing skills.

## Waivers

Students must fulfill all 36 hours of required courses. If it is impossible for a student to take a required course, or if a student has already taken one of the core courses or its equivalent at another institution and petitions to waive the requirement, the student must still complete the credit hours in some other course.

## Requirements

### Core Courses

LES 401	Legal Research And Citation <sup>1</sup>	4
LES 501	Introduction to Graduate Legal Studies	4
LES 504	Graduate Seminar	4
LES 512	Theories of Justice	4
	or LES 524 Law and Social Movements	
LES 587	Public Advocacy	4

<b>Elective courses (with approval of advisor) <sup>2</sup></b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>36</b>

<sup>1</sup> All students who have not completed LES 401 or its equivalent should take LES 401 during the first semester it is available. Students who wish to receive credit for an equivalent course for which they received a grade of B or better, or for other competency in this area, must apply for a waiver. The LES waiver committee will decide whether a course taken at another institution is equivalent to the LES course(s). Students requesting a waiver should consult with their advisor for further information and instructions.

<sup>2</sup> Graduate students must take 16 hours of elective, including a minimum of 8 hours of LES-prefixed electives. Students may choose two of the four PAD courses required for graduate certificate in Public sector Labor Relations. Students may also create their own focus from the resources of the Department, College, or University. Suggested areas of focus include, but are not limited to, Law and Public Policy; Human Rights/Social justice; Criminal Justice; or Regulatory Compliance.

## Master's Closure

Completion of LES 504 is required of all master's degree candidates as a closure exercise. Students who do not complete the course must register for LES 597 (zero credit hours, one billable hour) each regular semester (fall/spring) until the work/project is complete.

## Online

Online delivery permits a student to master the course material by attending classes from any location around the world, saving them the time and expense of having to attend the classes in person.

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