

# Legal Studies

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## Contact Information

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**Office Location:** PAC 350

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## Departmental Goals and Objectives

The Department of Legal Studies at UIS offers students an exceptional opportunity to study and experience law in action. Springfield is the seat of the Illinois legislature, the Illinois Circuit Court for Sangamon County, the Illinois Appellate Court for the Fourth District, the Illinois Supreme Court, and the United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois. Legal Studies students have the opportunity to interact with both the legislature and the state and federal courts in their classes and through internships and course experiences.

The Legal Studies department emphasizes law in a societal context within a broad-based liberal arts curriculum. The department seeks to develop the student's knowledge and understanding of the legal system and enhance analytical thinking, research, and writing skills. The department also aims to develop the professional and scholarly skills graduates need in law-related careers or graduate-level studies. Students are encouraged to participate in experiential learning opportunities, including working with the Illinois Innocence Project, competing with Moot Court or the Mock Trial Team, and participating in the Pre-Law Society.

Knowledge of the law and the legal system is essential for individuals in various careers, including politics, government, law enforcement, social work, lobbying, legislative work, legal analysis, nonprofit work, corrections, human resources, and court administration. Many professionals, especially in the public sector, need a comprehensive understanding of the legal system, how it works, how it interrelates with social change, and how it assists people in asserting their rights.

Students interested in learning more about legal studies or preparing to designate legal studies as an academic major should contact the Legal Studies Department. For advice on what kinds of classes provide good preparation for law school or information about how legal studies prepares students for law, students should contact the Pre-Law Center at [uisplc@uis.edu](mailto:uisplc@uis.edu).

## Honors in Legal Studies

Students may apply for participation in the department's honors program. To apply to graduate with Honors in Legal Studies, students must have a minimum 3.5 cumulative GPA and successfully complete the Honors section of LES 489 Closing Seminar.

## The Bachelor's Degree

A major in Legal Studies provides students with a fundamental knowledge of the law and legal systems, helping them evaluate legal issues and assess how the law operates in society through a balanced, interdisciplinary study of theory and practice. The Legal Studies curriculum offers a flexible course of study that provides the

professional and scholarly skills necessary for law school, graduate study, or many law-related careers, such as advocacy/nonprofit; social work; legislative and regulatory affairs; civil and human rights; court administration; legal analysis; compliance; program management; law enforcement; lobbying; union negotiation; business; journalism; and international affairs, to name a few.

The department is strong in the study of U.S. and comparative law; constitutional law; legal issues of race, gender, and class; international law and issues of immigration; corporate law; legal history; law and the humanities; law and the social sciences; law and government; issues of criminal and social justice; legal philosophy; and legal practice skills. Faculty are active in the Illinois Innocence Project, Mock Trial, the Pre-Law Center, and the UIS Immigration Task Force.

One distinctive advantage of the program is its location in Springfield, allowing students to participate directly in many legal institutions, including local, state, and federal courts, public and private law offices and clinics, and the state legislature.

## Advising

Each student is assigned a professional undergraduate advisor after being fully admitted to the LES program. The advisor helps students plan their overall course of undergraduate study. The advisor assists the student if difficulties arise during their UIS career. Students should talk to their advisor at least once each semester.

## Communication Requirement

UIS requires that students demonstrate proficiency in writing skills before attaining a degree. Instructors initially assess each student's writing skills in legal studies courses. Students identified as having writing difficulties are required to develop a plan of improvement with their advisor.

Certification of communication skills for LES majors occurs through assessing the student in LES 307. Students must demonstrate competency in standard written English by passing the writing portion of the courses with a grade of C or better (grades of C- or lower will not be accepted) to meet this campus requirement. Students who do not demonstrate adequate written communication skills will be required to take one or more lower-division writing courses to address their writing deficiencies before being allowed to graduate.

## Grading Policy

The Legal Studies program has no grading policy different from the University's undergraduate requirements.

## Mock Trial

A maximum of three credit hours of mock trial courses (LES 276; LES 277; LES 378; LES 379) may count towards the LES elective requirement. Any mock trial course hours beyond three will be credited as general elective hours.

## Program Learning Outcomes

1. Develop the analytical skills necessary to appreciate law as a social phenomenon.
2. Develop an understanding of how laws are created, applied, interpreted, and changed.
3. Develop knowledge of substantive areas of the law.

4. Develop experiential knowledge of professional legal environments.
5. Develop skills in legal and socio-legal research, writing, and analysis.

A Legal Studies Degree allows students the flexibility to focus on the knowledge and skills they will need to be successful in their future career plans.

The degree entails required core and elective courses. Required courses allow students to acquire essential legal background and to develop needed skills. Elective courses enable students to focus their program of study in a specific area.

Students should be aware that required courses are not offered every semester. Students are strongly advised to consult their academic advisor before registering. To ensure that all course work is appropriately integrated, students are encouraged to work out plans for their academic careers with their LES advisor.

The Legal Studies B.A. degree requires each student to take a minimum of three hours of internship for their ECCE Engagement Experience requirement. The internship placement must be law-related and approved by the faculty internship supervisor. Students may take up to six internship hours towards the ECCE requirement; any hours beyond six will be credited as general elective hours. Double majors may have different internship requirements and should consult with their LES and other major advisors.

When necessary and advisable, students may waive the program's three-hour internship requirement and substitute another ECCE course in its place. Waivers are given only in exceptional cases.

Students who double-major in Legal Studies and Political Science may count cross-listed courses with a PSC/LES prefix as electives in Legal Studies.

## Requirements

### Core courses

LES/PSC 202	Introduction to the American Legal System	3
LES 307	Law and Society	3
LES 401	Legal Research And Citation	4
LES 414	American Constitution: Government Powers and Institutions	3
LES/PSC 416	The American Constitution and Civil Liberties	3
LES 489	Closing Seminar: Ethics and Current Legal Questions	3

**LES Electives <sup>1</sup>** **15**

**Total Hours** **34**

<sup>1</sup> Any LES-prefixed course that is not a core requirement will count towards the LES elective requirement.

## Minors

- Legal Studies Minor

## Transfer Courses

Students transferring from another institution may petition to count up to nine credit hours of non-UIS legal studies course work towards their LES major requirements.