

Law, Politics and Society

PROGRAM OVERVIEW The Law, Politics and Society program offers students a multidisciplinary perspective on the complex interactions of law, culture, economics, politics, and social structure. Situated firmly within a liberal arts education, the program does not treat law as a fixed, naturally given feature of social life, or as a professional practice reserved for specialists such as lawyers, judges, and legislators. Instead, the program understands law, as a pervasive part of everyday life, to be socially constructed and contested. The LPS major is designed to prepare students for effective participation as citizens in a civil society. In this major students will:

- participate actively as citizens in civil society;
- read and understand legal texts, court decisions, and theoretical writing, and use those texts effectively to convey complex ideas and arguments in writing;
- know and articulate the difference between law as a professional practice and law as a topic of liberal arts inquiry;
- demonstrate awareness of how issues of justice, morality, authority, order, legitimacy, individualism, and community create tensions within ordered social life;
- explain how historical development and different cultural practices, social organizations, and political systems affect law and justice around the world;
- assess critically how people interpret, respond to, and experience law and the legal system based on factors such as race/ethnicity, class, gender, and religion;
- deploy contemporary legal, critical, and/or interpretive theories in their own analyses of political, social, or legal events or situations.

FACULTY Oversight for the program is provided by an interdisciplinary Advisory Board with one member from each of the core departments affiliated with the program: English, History, Philosophy and Religion, Politics and International Relations, Rhetoric and Communication and Sociology. Advising for the major is divided among faculty in these core departments.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION No specific preparation is required. Students who enjoyed high school government and history classes, and students who are particularly interested in the nature of public life, and in the engagement with political and social issues are often drawn to the LPS major.

REQUIREMENTS FOR MAJOR In addition to a core list of courses, LPS majors are required to take two courses numbered 100 or above from each of the below categories for a total of six courses.

Creating Law & Policy

Courses in this category will focus primarily on the structures and people that create, interpret & implement laws. Students should leave these courses with an understanding of the political, legal, and social pressures on lawmakers and legal systems, and ways that various official sites of legality interact with each other in the creation of law and policy, and the governance of society.

Understanding & Responding to Contemporary Issues

Courses in this category will engage students in an in-depth examination of particular problems facing society, focusing on identifying the complex web of contributing factors (legal, political & social) as well as possible avenues of solution. Courses should be focused on particular issues but provide students with ways of thinking that will translate to examination of other issues not discussed in class.

Constructing Conceptions of Law, Politics & Society

Courses in this category will focus primarily on the way particular factors (social, structural, historical, cultural, rhetorical, literary, etc.) shape our understanding of law, politics and society. As a result of these courses, students should question the ideal of neutrality often presented in these realms. Students should leave these classes with a more critical and nuanced attitude toward claims of the way the law, politics and society interact and able to critically evaluate how their beliefs about these things have shaped their view of this interaction. Finally, these courses should provide students with ways to make decisions about different aspects of law, politics and society in the face of the recognition that such decisions are not neutral.

DRAKE CURRICULUM The Drake Curriculum, required of all undergraduates, is designed to help students meet personal and professional goals as they acquire fundamental knowledge and abilities in ten Areas of Inquiry, including communication, critical thinking, artistic experience, historical consciousness, information and technology literacy, international and multicultural experiences, scientific and quantitative literacy, values and ethics and engaged citizenship. Students work closely with their academic advisers to craft a program of study in general education that prepares students for civic and professional leadership.

The Drake Curriculum also requires first-year seminars, which foster development of critical thinking and written and oral communication skills through a topical focus; and a Senior Capstone, in which students demonstrate the capacity to bring information, skills and ideas to bear on one project.

INTERNSHIPS & OPPORTUNITIES Drake's location in Des Moines, Iowa's capital city, gives LPS majors the opportunity to intern in a variety of local law firms or in various parts of state and local government. Drake also offers a Washington Semester Program. These internships in the nation's capital are available to a few students each semester. Students interested in careers in public service receive excellent experience in the program.

CAREER OPTIONS LPS majors use their degrees for entrance into state, local and federal government service, business careers, social work, journalism, teaching and politics. Drake law, politics and society graduates pursue a variety of career paths, including attendance at prestigious law schools such as Harvard, Yale and Columbia.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVITIES Although it is not associated directly with the major, a number of students have benefited from participation in the mock trial program. Drake's mock trial team has been effective and extremely successful at the highest levels of national competition.

HOW TO REACH US

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