

School of Public Policy and Administration
Faculty of Liberal and Professional Studies

AP/PPAS/POLS 4130A 6.00 POLITICS, LAW AND THE COURTS

MAPPING THE ARGUMENTS FOR JUSTICE

2024-2025

TUESDAY 11:30 AM-2:30 PM EST

LIVE CLASSES OVER ZOOM ONLY

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[<https://profiles.laps.yorku.ca/profiles/thwong/>]

“We must make our choice.

*We may have democracy, or we may have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few,
but we can’t have both.”*

~ Justice Louis Brandeis [allegedly]

*** Adapted Standardized Information from York University ***

York University recognizes that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships with the territories upon which York University campuses are located that precede the establishment of York University. York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region ([LA&PS Land Acknowledgement](#)). For video, see [Understanding the Land Acknowledgement](#).

1. SEMINAR OVERVIEW: PURSUE JUSTICE FOR ALL

In the 2024-2025 academic year, the seminar is divided into six modules with four classes each. The first module covers an overview of the justice system, access to justice, judicial decision making and litigating for social change. The next four modules cover criminal law, environmental law, health law as well as laws related to Big Tech. The sixth module covers distributive justice, with a focus on tax law.

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES: ASK YOURSELF TOUGH QUESTIONS

The learning outcomes could be transformative if you want them to be. If you are willing, at the end of our time together, you would be able to ask the tough questions needed in challenging the status quo: does it have to be this way?

Like university studies in general, the seminar is designed to develop your capabilities in critical thinking, information literacy, effective communication as well as a sense of your responsibility.

Critical thinking. A big challenge in your daily experience is to live with ambiguity. The world is not neatly organized, and it won't organize itself for you. But you can make sense of what you initially see as disorganization if you want to. Hopefully this seminar will give you plenty of opportunities to learn to face the messy world.

Information literacy. In our society another big challenge is to live with information overload. The information flow does not come with navigation manuals or handouts or PowerPoint slides. But you can separate the useful information from the noise if you want to. Hopefully this seminar will give you plenty of opportunities to learn to separate the good information from the bad information.

Effective communication. Whether some ideas become entrenched often rests on how they are argued. At times unfortunately the most compelling arguments beat the most sensible ideas. But you can be precise and concise in making your arguments if you want to. Hopefully the seminar will give you plenty of opportunities to learn to cut to the chase.

A sense of your responsibility. University education is to enlighten, not to indoctrinate to conform. It incurs opportunity costs for not just you but also our society. Sadly, nowadays our society allows university education to become just a big broken promise that mutates into a gigantic opportunity loss. But if you want to you can help make things right by learning to be responsible. As responsible students, you would solve the problems you are asked to solve on your own rather than just giving up and asking others to solve them for you. Hopefully the seminar will give you plenty of opportunities to learn to nurture your identity of responsibility.

On how to learn in this seminar, here are three actionable suggestions:

- **Pay attention.** Once you start paying attention many seemingly unanswerable questions will end up as information that you can simply look up.

- **Prepare relentlessly.** Students are expected to do most of their work outside the classroom, and they are expected to demonstrate their outside work inside the classroom.
- **Own it.** When you think you have run into a problem, look for the solution yourself. Whenever something does not go your way, ask the following series of questions: “What have I done wrong and how can I do better?”

At university you learn to become not only a productive employee but also an informed and responsible citizen. If you learn to think about justice in a way that signifies its important role in society, you will have achieved something in this seminar.

Your seminar grade is just a reflection of your performance in the seminar, but you are the only one who really knows whether you are making any progress in learning to become a lifelong learner. A grade is just a grade. In five years no one will care what you get as a student in this seminar. But people do care who you are as a human being – whether you care not only about your own self-interests but also about others’ well-being.

3. SEMINAR MATERIALS: CONNECT THE DOTS TO SEE THE BIG PICTURE

Students would work through judicial decisions, statutes, academic journal articles, think tank reports, government papers, polls, op-eds as well as news stories.

4. TEACHING APPROACH: VIEW OUR WORLD THROUGH THE LENS OF LEGAL REALISM

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Students shall note the following:

- *Zoom is hosted on servers in the United States and Canada. Recordings done since May 4, 2022 are stored in Canada. For more information, please refer to the notes on [Zoom Privacy and Security](#) provided by Information Security at York.*
- *If you have privacy concerns about your data, provide only your first name or a nickname when you join a session.*
- *The system is configured in a way that all participants are automatically notified when a session is being recorded. In other words, a session cannot be recorded without you knowing about it.*

The seminar adopts an integrated perspective by thinking about the justice system as a complex system. Instead of considering politics, law and courts as separate from each other the seminar will start with the idea that politics, law and courts do interact with each other. The perspective will enable us to view the pursuit of justice through realistic lens. Hopefully through an exploration of complexity we will emerge with a deeper understanding of the kind of justice we have and the kind of justice we want to have.

In each class, students will be called upon to answer questions. Please consider everything said in class as feedback to your work. Given the design of the seminar, classes will not be recorded to try to protect all parties involved. Please note that informed consent is required to record anyone or anything during the seminar. As there are

multiple sections of the seminar, no doubt students can find a suitable section with recordings that will suit their needs if a seminar with recordings will work best with their preferred learning styles.

No class is designed to be missed. Given the design of the seminar, there is no guarantee that any student who misses any class can catch up.

As long as students can attend all classes in full and can set aside on average about 10 additional hours a week to do the required work after each class students will have a reasonable chance to achieve the learning outcomes set for the seminar.

I am keen to talk shop almost in all my waking hours. For security purposes, students must use their York University email accounts for seminar correspondence. The designated seminar email account is taxlaw@yorku.ca. All emails must have 4130A in the subject line. Students who have questions that they think they cannot find answers on their own can email their questions to taxlaw@yorku.ca with their phone numbers, and we will have a conversation.

5. EVALUATION: MAP THE ARGUMENTS FOR JUSTICE

The evaluation focuses on concept mapping of arguments with oral exams designed to help develop information literacy, critical thinking and effective communication as well as a sense of responsibility as lifelong learners.

Please set up a Cmap Cloud account using your York University email address by the start of the first class: <https://cmapcloud.ihmc.us>.

All students will be graded and ranked in comparison to their peers. That is, for example, at the end of the term students who have attended more classes than others will likely have advantages over those who attended fewer classes. The reason is that the former students have likely learnt more than the latter, and their learning outcomes would likely show up in their work done for the seminar.

A performance assessment of students will be posted on eClass by the start of each class for all the work done up to that point.

A letter grade for the seminar will be given to each student at the end of the academic year based on the following components. On grading schemes, see <https://calendars.students.yorku.ca/2023-2024/grades-and-grading-schemes>.

As indicated before, please consider everything said in class as feedback to your work.

**** Adapted Standardized Information from York University ****

Students are not permitted to use generative artificial intelligence (AI) in this seminar. Submitting any work created through the use of generative AI tools will be considered a violation of York University's [Senate Policy on Academic Honesty](#). For more information, please review [AI Technology & Academic Integrity: Information for Students](#).

Seminar Evaluation Components

Assessment	Due date	Weight %	Learning Outcomes
5.1 In-class Q&A	Answer questions on challenging issues in each of the 24 classes	10%	Articulating ideas
5.2 A minimum of five concept maps of arguments from five different classes from five different modules	Mapping question for each class to be discussed at the end of each class; a Cmap to be submitted by 7 am EST Sunday ahead of the following class	30%	Mapping arguments
5.3 A minimum of two oral defenses of two of the concept maps submitted	In class; students up for oral defenses to be listed in class rundown to be posted on eClass before class	15%	Making arguments
5.4 Self-evaluation of each of the concept maps submitted	To be submitted by 7 am EST Sunday after selected maps of the same mapping question are discussed in class	15%	Evaluating arguments
5.5 Capstone Project of one concept map plus an oral exam of the map	Capstone Project question to be discussed after the drop date; map to be submitted by 7 am EST Sunday April 6; oral exam to be scheduled by March 18 and to be held after April 6	30%	Demonstrating everything learnt from the seminar
		100%	

5.1. In-class Q & A [10%]

Students would answer questions on challenging issues in each class. We'll go over the Q & A protocol in the first class.

5.2. A minimum of five concept maps of arguments from five different classes from five different modules [30%]

Students would use Cmap to produce concept maps. A research question for concept mapping of a class would be discussed at the end of each class. Students would make each submission to taxlaw@yorku.ca using their York University email account with the email subject “4130A: [your last name]-[class number for the mapping question]-5.2” following the submission protocol by 7 am Sunday before the next class. We’ll go over the submission protocol in the first class.

5.3. A minimum of two oral defenses of two of the maps submitted [15%]

Students would be selected for oral defense of their concept maps in class. Students who are selected will be listed in the class rundown on eClass by the start of the class. We’ll go over the oral defense protocol in the first class.

5.4. Self-evaluation of each of the maps submitted [15%]

Students would grade their own concept maps after the in-class review of maps submitted for the same mapping question. Students would make each submission to taxlaw@yorku.ca using their York University email account with the email subject “4130A: [your last name]-[class number for the mapping question]-5.4” following the submission protocol by 7 am Sunday after the in-class review. We’ll go over the submission protocol in the first class.

5.5. Capstone Project of one map plus an oral exam of the map [30%]

Students would produce a concept map based on a Capstone Project research question to be discussed in class after the drop date. Students would make the submission to taxlaw@yorku.ca using their York University email account with the email subject “4130A: [your last name]-5.5” following the submission protocol by 7 am Sunday April 6. Students would sit for an oral exam of the map to be held after April 6. The oral exam would be scheduled by March 18. We’ll go over the submission and oral exam protocol when the Capstone Project question is discussed in class.

6. Tentative Class Schedule That Might Be Adjusted Based on the Learning Trajectory of Students

Module I: JUST WORLD FALLACY	<p>Sept. 10, 2024 – Class 1: A system of justice</p> <p>Sept. 17, 2024 – Class 2: Access to justice</p> <p>Sept. 24, 2024 – Class 3: Judicial decision making</p> <p>Oct. 1, 2024 – Class 4: Litigating for social change</p>
Module II: LAW & ORDER	<p>Oct. 8, 2024 – Class 5: Mandatory minimum</p> <p>Oct. 22, 2024 – Class 6: Auto theft</p> <p>Oct. 29, 2024 – Class 7: Cybercrime</p> <p>Nov. 5, 2024 – Class 8: Policing</p>
Module III: CLIMATE CRISIS	<p>Nov. 12, 2024 – Class 9: Wildfires</p> <p>Nov. 19, 2024 – Class 10: Pipeline</p> <p>Nov. 26, 2024 – Class 11: Carbon tax</p> <p>Dec. 3, 2024 – Class 12: Greenwashing</p>
Module IV: HEALTH & WELL-BEING	<p>Jan. 7, 2025 – Class 13: Disabilities</p> <p>Jan. 14, 2025 – Class 14: Medical assistance in dying</p> <p>Jan. 21, 2025 – Class 15: Pharmacare & dental care</p> <p>Jan. 28, 2025 – Class 16: Privatization</p>
Module V: BIG TECH	<p>Feb. 4, 2025 – Class 17: Competition</p> <p>Feb. 11, 2025 – Class 18: Freedom of expression</p> <p>Feb. 25, 2025 – Class 19: AI</p> <p>Mar. 4, 2025 – Class 20: Privacy</p>
Module VI: DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE	<p>Mar. 11, 2025 – Class 21: Food insecurity</p> <p>Mar. 18, 2025 – Class 22: Housing</p> <p>Mar. 25, 2025 – Class 23: Charities</p> <p>Apr. 1, 2025 – Class 24: Tax injustices</p>

Additional Adapted Standardized Information from York University

**** Academic Integrity ****

As a student at York University, you have a responsibility to both understand and uphold the integrity of the academic experience. The Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies supports the International Center for Academic Integrity's [definition of academic integrity](#). That is, you will be committed to acting in all academic matters, even in the face of adversity, with honesty, trust, fairness, courage, respect and responsibility. Here is how you can demonstrate academic integrity in the completion of this course:

- **Respect the ideas of others:** Your course work should represent your own knowledge and ideas. [You should not falsely claim credit for ideas that are not your own, by presenting another's work as yours](#). If you are quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing another person's work in order to support your own ideas, identify the work and the author through proper citation practices. For more information about how to cite properly, use the [Student Papers and Academic Research Kit](#) (SPARK). You can improve your writing, research, and personal learning abilities through the [Learning Commons](#), or by visiting the [Writing Centre](#) or [ESL Open Learning Centre](#).
- **Respect your peers:** [Know when you are allowed to collaborate](#). Ask your instructor about what group work entails when it comes to the [sharing of work](#). In test situations and assignments, don't steal or give answers to your peers, whether in-person or online (e.g., in group chats and/or on [third-party content-sharing websites](#), such as Chegg, Course Hero, etc.). Both cheating and aiding in a breach of academic honesty are violations of York University's academic honesty policy.
- **Respect your course instructor(s):** Understand what your instructors are asking of you in class, as well as on assignments, tests and/or exams. If you are unsure, ask your professor or teaching assistant. They are committed to making you feel supported and want to assess you fairly and with integrity. Please do not submit the same piece of work for more than one course without your instructor's permission. That can be considered an act of cheating.
- **Respect yourself:** When you act with integrity, you know that your work is yours and yours alone. You do not allow others to take tests for you. [You do not buy or otherwise obtain term papers or assignments](#). You do the work. As a result, you know that you earned the grades that you receive, so you can be proud of your York degree. By acting with integrity in your course work, you are also practising a valuable professional skill that is important in all workplaces.
- **Take responsibility:** If you have acted in an academically dishonest way, you can demonstrate courage and take responsibility for your mistake. You can admit your mistake to your course instructor as soon as possible.

Students who engage in academic dishonesty can be subject to disciplinary action under the [Senate Policy on Academic Honesty](#). Your lack of familiarity with the Senate Policy does not constitute a defense against its application. Some academic offences can also constitute offences under the [Criminal Code of Canada](#), which means that you may also be subject to criminal charges.

**** Intellectual Property ****

Course materials are designed for use as part of PPAS 41 30A at York University and are the intellectual property of Professor Thaddeus Hwong unless otherwise stated. Third-party copyrighted materials (such as book chapters, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian copyright law. Students may not publish, post on an Internet site, sell, or otherwise distribute any course materials or work without the instructor's express permission. Course materials should only be used by students enrolled in this course. Copying this material for distribution (e.g., uploading material to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a charge of misconduct according to York's [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), the [Senate Policy on Academic Honesty](#), and/or legal consequences for copyright violations.

**** Student Support and Resources ****

To help you succeed academically, York University offers a wide range of resources and services. Everything from writing workshops and peer mentorship to wellness support and career guidance is available to fulfill our LA&PS students' needs. Explore the links below to access these on-campus resources:

- [Academic Advising](#) is available to provide students support and guidance in making academic decisions and goals.
- [Student Accessibility Services](#) are available for support and accessibility accommodation when required.
- [Student Counselling, Health & Wellbeing](#) offers workshops, resources, and counselling to support your academic success.
- [Peer-Assisted Study Sessions \(PASS\) Program](#) provides student study sessions for students to collaborate and enhance their understanding of course content in certain courses.
- [Student Numeracy Assistance Centre at Keele \(SNACK\)](#) supports students in courses involving math, stats, and Excel.
- [The Writing Centre](#) provides multiple avenues of writing-based support including drop-in sessions, one-to-one appointments, a Multilingual Studio, and an Accessibility Specialist.
- [ESL Open Learning Centre \(OLC\)](#) supports students with building proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking English.
- [Learning Skills Services](#) provides tips for time management, effective study and learning habits, keeping up with coursework, and other learning-related supports.
- [Learning Commons](#) provides links to supports for time management, writing, study skills, preparing for exams, and other learning-related resources.
- [Roadmap to Student Success](#) provides students with timely and targeted resources to help them achieve academic, personal, and professional success.
- [Office of Student Community Relations \(OSCR\)](#) is responsible for administering the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) and provides critical incident support.
- [goSAFE](#) is staffed by York students and can accompany York community members to and from any on-campus location, such as the Village Shuttle pick-up hub, parking lots, bus stops, or residences.
- For a full list of academic, wellness, and campus resources visit [Student Support & Resources](#).

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