

York University
SPORT MANAGEMENT
SPORT AND THE LEGAL ENVIRONMENT
SPRT 1020
WINTER 2026

INSTRUCTOR: PROFESSOR DAVID DOOREY, Ph.D
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Blog: Law of Work (lawofwork.ca)

COURSE TIME AND ROOM: Thursdays 10 a.m., Room 2055, Markham Campus

COURSE DESCRIPTION/OBJECTIVES:

This course provides an introduction to the key intersections between the law and the world of sport. We will explore a wide range of legal areas and principles, including criminal law, tort law, contract law, labour law, and intellectual property law. No background in law is assumed. The course considers legal liability for sports and recreation organizations, circumstances in which tort and criminal law can be applied to incidents occurring on the field of play, the legal status of athletes, the rights of athletes to control their image and likeness, the law of international sport, including anti-doping rules, various sports dispute resolution processes, and collective bargaining and player representation in professional sports. By the end of this course, students will have acquired a strong understanding of basic principles of law and how those principles arise in the sports environment. This knowledge will be beneficial as students move through their sports management program and then into the working world.

PREPERATION FOR CLASS

You are responsible for all assigned material covered in the lecture as well as the readings. The course materials include a mix of textbook and supplemental readings posted on the course e-Class page. There will also be handouts posted on e-Class and occasional videos to watch and assigned podcasts. Be sure to keep up with the readings. We will have a variety of guest speakers join us throughout the term. Finally, students will occasionally work in groups on problems assigned in class.

READINGS

There are two principal sources of readings. Most weeks, there is a reading written by Professor Doorey that explains the subject matter at a level appropriate for a first-year university course. You should do this reading first. Then there is a textbook. Sometimes the textbook is, in my opinion, too advanced or confusing for a first year course, which is why I wrote the introductory readings. Pay attention to the pages that are assigned from the text because often I have not assigned an entire chapter.

Text: H. Findlay, *Legal Aspects of Sport and Recreation* (Emond, 2022). Available in Markham Bookstore or directly from the publisher website in both paper and digital versions. There may be second-hand copies available. The costing information is available at the following link:

<https://emond.ca/Store/Books/Legal-Aspects-of-Sport-and-Recreation?r=%2fStore%3fsearchtext%3dsport%26searchmode%3danyword>

METHOD OF EVALUATION

There will be an in-class midterm test (tentatively scheduled for **Thursday, February 5** and final exam scheduled during the final exam period of **April 8-24**. York University assumes that students are available during that period to write the exams. Plan your travel accordingly. I do not schedule the final exam. I find out the same time as you when the University posts the exam schedule.

Mid Term Test (February 5 in-class)	25%
Short Assignments	30%
Participation/Attendance	10%
Final Exam (On Campus, Exam Period)	35%
TOTAL	100%

Missed Tests and Late Assignments

There will be no make-up test for the mid-term. For students who present a proper medical authorization form as per the University's policy explaining that they could not write the mid-term due to medical or other recognized accommodation reasons, the midterm grade will be rolled into the final exam component.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

The assignments must be completed by the student. **Any submitted assignment that is written partially or entirely by AI software will be awarded a zero and treated as academic plagiarism.** Just like you cannot submit work written by another person and pass it off as your own, you cannot pretend that work prepared by a computer is your own work. Assignments will be uploaded through plagiarism software that flags suspicious submissions that could be generated by AI and the graders are trained to identify assignments that look like they are AI generated. The assignments are graded quite generously, so it really isn't worth the risk for you to use AI. You are much better off actually trying to learn how to do something that could be useful to you down the road.

See over for detailed reading list.

DETAILED READING LIST

Here is the detailed summary of the materials covered each week. You are responsible for all the content of the assigned readings.

Lecture 1 (January 8): *Introduction to Sports Law*

In this introductory class, we will discuss the structure and expectations for the course. We will then move into the substance of the course by examining the scope of the subject matter we will cover. What exactly do we mean by *Sports Law*? To answer this question we need to learn some basics about the Canadian legal system and then to identify where sports fit into this system. The main reading for this lecture is a short paper written by Professor Doorey which is found on the course e-Class page. Be sure to have read that piece ahead of class one.

Required Readings:

D. Doorey, “Introduction to the Law of Sport” [Posted on course e-Class website]

Supplemental Reading (Not mandatory but you might find it useful to help you understand the materials): **Textbook, Chapter 1: *The Law***

- Discussion: *How to Prepare a Course Summary in a Law course* (Handout)
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Lecture 2 (Jan 22): *The Law of Torts in Sports: Intentional Torts & Negligence*

This week we explore the torts, which are legal rules invented by judges that permit a person who is injured by the actions of another to recover damages for harm suffered. Torts can be intentional (such as assault and battery) or the perpetrator might not have intended to cause the harm that occurred, but their actions are nevertheless blameful because they acted recklessly or without reasonable care for the safety of the victim (this is known as *negligence*). We will examine both intentional torts and negligence in the context of sports.

Required Readings:

D. Doorey, “Torts and Sports in Canada”, available on e-Class

Text: **Chapter 2** Negligence and Liability in Sport, p. 17-26

Class Exercise: *Is this a tort?* (Distributed in class)

- Discussion: *How to Prepare a Case Summary in a Law course* (Handout)
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Lecture 3 (Jan. 29): *Tort Liability and Defences*

This week we continue our discussion of tort law by exploring a variety of defences to liability available to defendants in negligence cases. We then shift gears and consider basic elements of the law of contracts before examining one type of contract clause found in professional sports and athlete endorsement contracts known as a “morals clause”.

Required Readings

Text: Chapter 2, Negligence and Liability, pp. 30-37

Chapter 11, Example of Waiver and Indemnity Clause (p. 264)

Supplemental Readings on e-Class

In-Class Exercise:

Read the decision called *Crocker v. Sundance Northwest Resorts* (1988) posted on e-Class and decided by the Supreme Court of Canada dealing with negligence and the waiver defence. In class, we will prepare a **Case Summary** of that decision in the format found in Box 2.1 (p. 4) of the Lecture 2 handout reading (for *Agar v. Canning*).

Distribute Assignment 1: Case Summary Exercise (Due January 28)

Lecture 4 (Feb 5): *Sports and Criminal Law*

This week we explore the intersection of criminal law and sport. The *Criminal Code of Canada* governs conduct that the federal government deems worthy of criminal sanctions, including fines, probation, and imprisonment. The *Criminal Code* is enforced by the police and criminal charges are prosecuted by government lawyers known as Crown Attorneys. As discussed in Lecture 1, in this Sports Law course, we are interested in the application of the criminal law to two scenarios: (1) conduct on the “field of play”, and (2) conduct outside of the field of play, but that has “sports-related” consequences. We will also spend some time reviewing your preparation for the midterm test.

Required Readings

Text: Chapter 10. Applying Legal Principles to Violence, pages 229-236

On E-Class:

D. Doorey, “Brief Introduction to Criminal Law and Sport”

VIDEO: [“The Most Vicious Attack in NHL History”](#)

G. Wyshynski, “Acquitted Hockey Canada Players Can Return on Dec. 1” ESPN: https://www.espn.com/nhl/story/_/id/46227878/acquitted-hockey-canada-players-return-dec

Midterm Test: February 12 in class (10 am to noon)

Reading Week: February 14-20

Lecture 5 (Feb. 26): *The Legal Status of Athletes and Coaches*

This week we consider the issues relating to the status of athletes in the world of sports. This issue is important because the legal status of an athlete determines which set of legal rules govern their relationship with the team, league or association. For example, if an athlete is an “employee”, then employment laws apply, but if the athlete is an “independent contractor” then the law treats them as a little one-person business and employment laws do not apply. What legal tests are applied to distinguish “employees” from *not* “employees”?

READINGS:

Text: Chapter 5 Working Relationships, pp. 113-119, 128

Virtual Kit on eClass

- D. Doorey, “Workers, Sports, and the Law”
- CBC News, [“Ontario Excludes OHL Players from Provincial Employment Standards”](#) (November 16 2018)
- [Ontario Employment Standards Act, Regulation 477/18](#) Non-Application of Act to Major Junior Hockey Players (we will look at this in class)
- M. Conklin, [“Two Classifications Enter, One Classification Leaves: Are UFC Fighters Employees or Independent Contractors?”](#) (2020) 29 Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal 227 (excerpts)

The remainder of course readings will be posted in January.