This course will introduce students to the basic principles of legal reasoning -- how to think like a lawyer -- and provide students with an overview of the legal system. Students will use rule-based and analytical reasoning to engage with hypotheticals mirroring the laws, guidelines, and standards one encounters daily, from mobile phone subscription plans to school dress codes. Students will then consider law within the framework of institutions, or the enduring set of rules and patterns that regulate behavior, such as constitutions, the criminal justice system, tort law, and the larger court system. Multiple national legal systems shall be explored in addition to the US, providing students with a global outlook and giving them the tools to evaluate why some systems work and others fail. In this highly interactive course, students will participate in simulations, actively propose and discuss hypotheticals, and work in groups to design alternative legal systems. They will also hear from guest speakers including practicing lawyers, academics from law schools, and leaders of civil society organizations, and attend court proceedings. This course is relevant for students who are interested in law as a career and for anyone who is curious about what makes our social and political world tick.
Course Organization

1. The course is divided into two parts. The first part deals with “legal reasoning,” and how to use the tools of legal reasoning to approach everyday problems. The second part deals with legal institutions, consisting both of an exploration of the legal contexts in the US and from around the world.

2. Since this is a three-week course, roughly five days will be devoted to Part I (legal reasoning). Along with readings on legal reasoning itself, students will receive a workbook from the instructor containing problems to solve based on the principles they have just studied. The final two days of Part I will involve a discussion of the real-world application of legal reasoning, and how they can use this knowledge without being law students/lawyers themselves, with a focus on how to read, understand and interpret consumer contracts and school/university rules and regulations.

3. The next eight days will be devoted to Part II (legal institutions), which will provide a macro view of how the different aspects of the legal system operate and interact with each other. Students will learn basic, context-dependant differences between legal systems across the world such as common law vs. civil law systems, adversarial vs. inquisitorial systems etc. Students will learn why legal systems are the way they are in different parts of the world, and the role of historical, socio-political and cultural factors in structuring these systems. The American legal system will also be discussed through the lens of how two salient institutions operate in a manner that is distinct in many ways from the rest of the world—the tort system and the criminal justice system.

4. One day will be devoted to a field visit to a Chicago-based court.

5. The final day will consist of a mock trial. The instructor will divide students into teams. Each team shall consist of two litigators (who will argue in “court”) and one researcher, who is responsible for preparing the memo. As part of their last assignment, students will have to write down their reflections from the trial.

6. There shall be guest lectures by people in the field in a few classes, including lawyers, activists and academics.
Grading

1. Class Participation (20%).
2. Mock Trial (30%)
3. Essay (50%)

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Familiarity with the principles of rule-based and analytical reasoning
2. Ability to apply the principles of rule-based and analytical reasoning to everyday problems.
3. Familiarity with the need for a court system.
4. Familiarity with types of court systems—formal and informal court systems.
5. Familiarity with differences between common and civil law systems.
6. Familiarity with differences between adversarial and inquisitorial systems.
7. Familiarity with methods of alternative dispute resolution.
8. Familiarity with the American tort system and an understanding of why it is unique institution.
9. Familiarity with the American criminal justice system and what makes it unique.
10. Familiarity with the effects of globalization on legal systems in America and across the world.
**Readings**

**Module 1: What is law?**


Legal Positivism:


Natural Law:


Sociological School of Jurisprudence:


John Dewey and the Law:


Realism:


**Module 2: Introduction to Legal Reasoning**

Frederick Schauer, Thinking Like a Lawyer: A New Introduction to Legal Reasoning, Harvard University Press (2012).

**Module 3: Application of the Principles of Legal Reasoning—Consumer Contracts and School Rules/Regulations**


**Module 4: Introduction to Legal Institutions**


**Module 5: Common and Civil Law Systems, Adversarial and Inquisitorial Systems**


Holger Spamann examines the myths and reality of common and civil law, Harvard Law Today (2022).


**Module 6: Introduction to the Tort System**

Movie Trailer: Erin Brokovitch


**Module 7: Introduction to the Criminal Justice System**


**Module 8: Effect of Globalization on Legal Institutions**


**Module 9: Introduction to Trials: Research, Memo-writing, and Argumentation**


Patrick Barry, Good With Words: Writing and Editing (2019).