

Course instructor: **Dr. Aleksander Domrin**, Professor of the Department of General and Interbranch Legal Disciplines, Faculty of Law, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

Syllabus

1. Course Description

a. Title of a Course:

Introduction to American Law

b. Pre-requisites: English (Upper Intermediate)

c. Abstract:

This course will give you a glimpse into six different areas of American law: Tort Law, Contract Law, Property, Constitutional Law, Criminal Law, and Civil Procedure. You will gain insight into the complexities and dilemmas that arise from the application of law in different settings, and what is distinctive about American approaches.

2. Online platform: Coursera

3. Course link: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/american-law?>

4. Language of instruction: English

5. Course Plan:

Module 1. Tort Law

Tort law governs how people may sue each other civilly (as opposed to criminally) in order to receive compensation for harms or injuries other people caused them. In this module, Professor Allen will explore the goals of tort law through a historic case. She will address what makes tort law distinct and issues surrounding negligence and liability.

Module 2. Contract Law

Contract law governs how promises between two individuals are enforced. Few areas of law impact our daily lives as much as contract law, and in this module you will gain a deeper understanding of what a contract is and what makes it enforceable. Professor Wilkinson-Ryan will address what constitutes a contract, why the law enforces them, the legal meanings of words in contracts, and the important requirement of consideration. Expectation damages, or the amount a court orders someone who breached a contract to pay will also be explored, all through hypothetical and real cases.

Module 3. Property Law

Property law governs the relationship between individuals and things, known as property. In this module, Professor Balganesch will explore the differences between property and tort and contract law and about several specific examples of property law in action: adverse possession, landlord/tenant, and licenses. You will learn about what makes U.S.

property law distinct - its origins in common law, imprint of legal realism, and pragmatism.

Module 4. Constitutional Law

The study of constitutional law is among the most exciting parts of the law because it provides for the structure and functioning of the U.S. government. In this module, Dean Ruger will address the document itself, how it has been applied over time, the history of the document, and what makes it unique. The structure of the U.S. government as a government of limited, separated powers will be explored along with the important individual rights the Constitution provides and how the U.S. Constitution compares to others around the world.

Module 5. Criminal Law

In this module, Professor Morse will focus on the basics of criminal law, an area of law so exciting that countless TV shows and movies have been based on it. The major aspects of criminal law will be discussed - why we impose punishment, when we impose the most punishment, and how the state proves a criminal case. Defenses to criminal charges, which are divided into justifications and excuses will also be addressed.

Module 6. Civil Procedure

In this module, Professor Wolff will introduce us to some of the major issues in civil procedure law. Civil procedure is the study of the rules of court that must be followed by the judge and parties in civil cases (as opposed to criminal cases – criminal procedure is a whole other area of the law, but law students learn civil procedure first because it gives the structure of typical trials). The essence of a law school civil procedure course is the study of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. A copy of these is linked in the syllabus for you to scan. The rules tell you how to file a lawsuit and how the court must function while it is considering a lawsuit. Professor Wolff will introduce you to the doctrinal area of procedure and will highlight some of the major modern issues in procedure law.

6. Reading List

Required: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/undefined>

7. Forms of Control:

- a. Current control: 6 graded multiple answer quizzes and 1 final test (80% Final grade)
- b. Intermediate control: interview with the instructor (20% Final Grade)

Students are also expected in an oral examination to deliver answers in which the following qualities will be assessed:

- audibility and clarity, pitch, proper articulation;
- fluency, appropriate forms of language including addressing the examiner, clarity of expression;
- appropriate content (proper coverage of legal issues, relevance of law in their responses, emphasis, anticipating or responding to other side; at least certain justification of the argument which has been supported).

8. Grading System: $\text{Fin.} = \text{Curr.} \cdot 0,8 + \text{Accum.} \cdot 0,2$

9. Methods of Instruction:

- use of online educational technologies
- use of accumulative system of control.

10. Special Equipment and Software Support (if required):

- a. Microsoft Windows 7 Professional RUS
- b. Microsoft Windows 10