

Undergraduate Program Assessment Plan 2008-2009  
**Legal Studies Program**  
**3/30/09**

**I. Program Overview**

The Legal Studies Program is an undergraduate program in the College of Letters and Sciences. Legal Studies currently has about 300 declared majors; in each of the past three years, the program has awarded about 100 to 120 undergraduate degrees. With the exception of courses taught by the three faculty hired as part of the Legal Studies Cluster, courses taught by the Associate Director, and courses funded by Extended Timetable, Legal Studies relies on the good will of other programs and departments for instructional support, including teaching assistants.

Although there is currently no formal graduate Legal Studies Program, the Legal Studies faculty has, with the assistance of the Institute for Legal Studies at the Law School, sought to create informal structures that bring together Ph.D. students from a variety of disciplines who have law-related interests. Activities have included colloquium series, brown bag seminars, and a regional legal studies conference.

**II. Learning Goals and Objectives**

**A. Introduction**

The Legal Studies Program's mission is to provide a liberal education across traditional disciplines, focusing on legal process, formal law and informal norms, legal institutions, and how they operate in society. The courses expose students to the many facets of the law as a social phenomenon – its evolution, its function, and its effects. This major is not a pre-law program, and it is fundamentally different from the professional program encountered in law school. It is, however, a suitable program for pre-law students and for those who plan to concentrate in law-related study to prepare for public service careers or graduate training.

**B. Goals**

The Legal Studies Program seeks to introduce students to:

- The social, political, economic, and cultural determinants of law.
- The social, political, and economic impacts of law at the macro level.
- The impact of law and other rules on individual level decision-making at the micro level.
- The dynamics of legal ideas and ideologies.
- The practical skills needed to analyze legal phenomena and to access legal resources, broadly defined.

- The nature of legal reasoning and analysis in common law, civil law, and other legal systems.
- The functioning of legal institutions, and how those institutions differ from other societal institutions.
- The place and relevance of law within the humanities and social sciences.
- The cross-cultural and international valences of law in distinctive social orders.

### **C. Specific Objectives**

Currently, Legal Studies has the following short- and long-term objectives for student learning:

- To increase student awareness of non-US legal systems, ideas, and institutions.
- To streamline and clarify for our students and ourselves the thematic requirements of the Legal Studies major.
- To implement a culminating experience that balances the need for students to have a broad-based summary course toward the end of the major with the realities of staffing a sufficient number of such courses given the large number of majors in the program.
- To continue to reorient and promote Legal Studies as an excellent major option within the liberal arts and to balance the humanities and social sciences requirements and aspirations of the program.
- To promote further linkages of law with other disciplines and areas of interest within the College of Letters and Sciences.

## **III. Efforts to Measures Student Performance**

### **A. Recent Background & Program History**

In 2001-2002, Legal Studies faculty members undertook a major recreation of the interdisciplinary undergraduate program in the major. The purpose of this effort was to move toward a genuinely interdisciplinary program (rather than something that is simply inter-departmental) and to incorporate major developments in interdisciplinary legal studies that have occurred over the last 25 years. The new curriculum took effect in the fall of 2003.

A central goal of the redesign was to integrate humanities more prominently into the curriculum. Two of the people hired through the Legal Studies Cluster help provide the enhanced humanities focus, as do other additions to our teaching staff.

More recently, beginning in the 2007-2008 academic year and continuing to the present, Legal Studies has undertaken its most in-depth self-study to date.

Three tangible changes resulted from this self-study:

- 1) Legal Studies reaffirmed its commitment to understanding law as a global, multicultural phenomenon. As an undergraduate instructional program, the primary way Legal Studies can further this commitment is to increase student exposure to transnational phenomena. As a result, we are currently submitting curriculum change proposals to the College. We will increase our non-U.S. requirement by asking that all students complete at least two courses that have a focus beyond the traditional U.S. legal institutions and phenomena. We are also encouraging faculty to include global perspectives in as many courses as possible.
- 2) Legal Studies eliminated a number of courses that are either no longer offered regularly or that do not meet the broader liberal arts background against which the program now understands itself.
- 3) Legal Studies is revising and clarifying its capstone or culminating experience requirement. A "Core Perspectives" requirement, meaning effectively that a student must take an advanced course taught by one of the Core Faculty in Legal Studies, is another of the changes that will be presented to the College for approval. Core Perspectives courses all present thematic, topical, or historical studies of law in terms of foundational approaches in both the humanities and social sciences.

## **B. Measurements of Student Learning Outcomes**

The Legal Studies Program uses the following tools to assess student learning:

- 1) *Course evaluations* distributed in each course and used to assess both student performance and teaching effectiveness.
- 2) *Exit surveys* given annually to graduating senior majors (current version attached).
- 3) *Annual assessment report* submitted by the Academic Advisor in the program and presented as part of the Legal Studies Program annual assessment meeting. This report consists of a statement by the staff and faculty who work most closely with student majors to provide a state of the program for other faculty. Its contents are intended to be a qualitative measure of student performance based upon an aggregate, though often anecdotal, experience of student concerns and successes.

Legal Studies is also considering some form of *portfolio review* or other collection of student work as an additional measure of student performance and how that performance reflects the communication and achievement of the program's goals. Details of this assessment tool have yet to be formalized.

#### **IV. Impact of Assessment Efforts**

Assessment and learning goals have been a central part of the Legal Studies Program. The recent voluntary self-study exercise will continue to be a guiding framework for our internal self-evaluation and our external reporting. Specific efforts to ensure that the program is meeting its obligations and moving toward its aspirations include the following:

##### **A. Use of Assessment Data & Continued Planning**

The assessment tools described above form the main data for the Legal Studies Program's annual meeting on assessment, during which the faculty and staff devote significant time to a review of that year's data. Anonymous course evaluation data, grade distributions, exit surveys, and assessment reports are distributed in advance of this meeting and program members then suggest any changes or modifications they might make to the program's operations. The Director of Legal Studies, in consultation with the staff and faculty, collects any significant changes proposed and determines their feasibility and benefits to the program.

##### **B. To whom the results are reported:**

All data from the assessment tools are reported to the Director, Core Faculty, and staff. An annual report from the Director is then reported back to all affiliates of the program, after the annual assessment review. As needed, those annual assessment reports and data will be reported to outside units such as the Dean of the College of Letters & Science or outside, interested reviewers.

##### **C. Deadlines for achieving milestones related to the above activities.**

Fall 2009	Receive approval from Curriculum Committee for revised Legal Studies major.
Fall 2009	Review first senior exit surveys and other assessment.
Spring 2010	Announce revised curriculum to current and potential majors.
Fall 2010	Implement revised curriculum.
Spring 2011	Review second and possibly third senior exit surveys and initial reports regarding revised curriculum.
Spring 2011	Review Core Perspectives requirement in terms of both student learning and rotation of courses among faculty.

**University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Legal Studies Program  
Survey of Graduating Seniors—May 2009**

**Please complete this questionnaire and return it to the Legal Studies Program Office.**

1. In what year of undergraduate study did you declare a Legal Studies major? Include years you attended college somewhere else.

- First year     
  Second year     
  Third year     
  Fourth year or later

2. Why did you choose a Legal Studies major?

3. Please indicate whether or not you are completing any of the following programs:

	Yes	No	
a. Second major (field: _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. Certificate (field: _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
c. Honors program (specify: _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

4. For each of the following areas, please indicate how much the Legal Studies courses you took contributed to your growth in that area:

	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
a. A sense of how the US legal system is similar to or different from other legal systems in the world	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Understanding of the social, political, economic, and cultural determinants and impacts of law	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. The practical skills needed to analyze legal phenomena and access legal resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Understanding of the nature of legal reasoning and analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. A sense of the functioning of legal institutions and how they differ from other societal institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Please rate the undergraduate program in Legal Studies. Overall, how do you rate:

		Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
a.	The overall quality of the Legal Studies courses that you took?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	The availability of Legal Studies faculty to discuss course-related issues outside of class?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	The quality of instruction in Legal Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.	The availability of advising in the Program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.	The quality of advising you received in the Program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6a. Do you have plans for graduate study?

		Yes	No
i.	No plans for graduate study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii.	Plan to go to a graduate program within the next three years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii.	Uncertain of future plans for graduate study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6b. If you have immediate or possible plans to enroll in a graduate program, which of the following describe your plans for graduate education?

		Check All That Apply
i.	Master's (field: _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii.	Ph.D. (field: _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii.	Teaching certification	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv.	Law degree	<input type="checkbox"/>
v.	Other (field: _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Have you found employment following graduation? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

If yes,

7a. Please describe where you will be working and what you will be doing:

7b. Do you feel your Legal Studies degree helped you secure employment?

\_\_\_ A lot \_\_\_ Somewhat \_\_\_ A little \_\_\_ Not at all

8. What were the best and worst aspects of the Legal Studies Program?