

LAW QUARTER (LAWQ)

LAWQ 1200 Introduction to American Law (4 Credits)

Introduction to American Law is a ten-week course taught in the law school and designed for undergraduate students with no prior legal training. Our goal is to understand what the American legal system is, how it works, and whether it delivers on its lofty promises. We will begin by examining how the American court system came to be and the essential characteristics of a just legal system – what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for a system that is, and is perceived as being, just. The course then pursues these questions by examining the principal actors in the legal system – lawyers, juries, and judges – and three types of legal dispute considered by American courts – criminal prosecutions, disputes between private parties, and suits by individuals against the government. We conclude by scrutinizing contemporary threats to justice, from executive challenges to courts' authority to the impacts of big data and artificial intelligence.