

Course Description  
for

**International Law**

**Fall 2020  
LAW 70401-01**

**Professor Mary Ellen O'Connell**

In the midst of a global pandemic the interconnectedness of our lives is being demonstrated. International law is the one means available to peacefully achieve a common vision of a better future for all. It is a system of rules, principles and procedures that regulate activity at the inter-state level. International law is an integral part of contemporary life, effecting issues of war and peace, the economy, human rights, health, culture, and the environment. It is a complete system of law, distinctive from national legal systems but deeply integrated with them.

The main objective of this course is to provide a comprehensive overview of the system of international law by introducing how international law is made, applied, and enforced. The course will also introduce the major subfields. It will prepare students for the practice of law as well as careers in peace studies, public policy, international relations, international business, and beyond.

No prior course in law is required. For students who have already studied international law as undergraduates or in other places, the course will provide much that is new. We will follow the classic American case method, which suits the study of international law as well as it does other foundation law courses, such as contracts, torts, property law, and constitutional law. Students will prepare the assignments for each class and deduce the contours of the legal principles involved in the judgments of international and national courts and tribunals. We will use the casebook O'Connell, Scott, Roht-Arriaza, and Bradlow, *The International Legal System* (Foundation Press, 7th ed. 2015). Professors Roht-Arriaza (Hastings), Bradlow (Pretoria), and I are updating the book in 2021. Class members will benefit from new material on human rights, migration, economy, and global health, among other topics.

Evaluation is by final exam. During the semester we will prepare for the exam with practice questions and review. My teaching assistant will organize discussion sessions to further assist you in understanding the material and preparing for the final exam. Strong or weak class participation is considered in the final grade for this three-credit hour course.

The approach outlined here will demonstrate that international law is a foundational course in the law curriculum. It will provide the prerequisite students need for advanced international law courses and for various moot court competitions, work on journals, note and paper topics, and other co- and extra-curricular activities. International law is also important to being a well-informed individual in an interconnected world.