

PHIL 155 section 01, **Philosophy of Law**
Mondays from 6pm to 8:45pm, Sweeney Hall 241
Fall 2024

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**This course is targeted at all pre-law students (regardless of their major of study) and philosophy students.*



Laws regulate nearly all aspects of our lives, but do we have an obligation to obey them? If so, what are the philosophical grounds of our duty to obey the law? Can we sometimes justifiably disobey the law, for instance when we find it deeply unjust?

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of law and the relation between law and morality. We will begin studying two influential opposing theories of law according to which (i) *truly unjust rules* do not count as law (natural law theory) and (ii) laws are the result of social conventions regardless of whether they are just (legal positivism). We will then move to a discussion of important philosophical and ethical questions raised by the study of law. These include the following: what are the limits of the government's right to limit citizens' freedom; is civil disobedience morally justifiable, what is the purpose of the criminal justice system, and how does law contribute to the reproduction of inequalities in society? In addition to holding philosophical discussions, we will study recent decisions made by the American Supreme Court, including those that relate to abortion, affirmative action and free speech on social media.

This course will be an opportunity for all students interested in attending law school to strengthen their reasoning and writing skills.