

Abilene Approval Chart for Curriculum Changes

A = Approve I = Information Item R = Respond In Writing

Course Number: PLAW 410 or Degree Plan(s):

New course to be added to the PLAW 410 to the Legal Studies Minor. See New Course Application for details.

		Dept./School	College	Dean	TEC	AUAC/Grad	Provost
	Campus-Level Academic Review¹						
	Change to a Course Include signatures from all chairs/program directors for cross-listed courses. ¹						
1.	Title (description unchanged)	A	A	A	I	I	I
2.	Description (not affecting content)	A	A	A	I	I	I
3.	Course term(s)	A	I	A	I	I	I
4.	Content (change of course outcomes)	A	A	A	I	I	A
5.	Number of credit hours	A	A	A	A	A	A
6.	Course number within the hundred	A	A	I	I	I	I
7.	Course number beyond the hundred	A	A	A	A	A	A
8.	Prerequisites	A	A	A	I	I	I
9.	Course restriction (e.g., majors only, junior standing)	A	A	A	A	A	A
10.	Level change (U to G or G to U)	A	A	A	A	A	A
11.	Cross list course	A	A	A	A	A	A
12.	Department of record	A	A	A	A	A	A
13.	Open or close a course	A	A	A	A	A	A
	Change to a Degree Plan						
14.	Educational Program — Revise	A	A	A	A	A	A
15.	Educational Program — Adopt/revise admission requirements	A	A	A	A	A	A
16.	GPA — Revise program-required GPA	A	A	A	A	A	A
17.	Minor — Revise	A	A	A	A	A	A

		Dept./School	College	Dean	TBC	AUAC/Grad	Provost	Campus Faculty	Senior VPAA	President
	Full Review									
	Change to Catalog Information (for Campus)									
18.	General requirements for Bachelor's and Associate Degrees	-	-	-	-	A	A	A	A	I
19.	Policies governing academic probation and suspension	-	-	-	-	A	A	A	A	I
20.	Requirements for graduating with honors	-	-	-	-	A	A	A	A	I
	Change to a Degree Plan									
21.	Educational Program — Add or Discontinue ²³	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	I
22.	Educational Program — Discontinue (Provost-proposed)	R	-	R	A	A	A	A	A	I
23.	Minor — Add or Discontinue	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	A	I
24.	Minor — Discontinue (Provost-proposed)	R	-	R	A	A	A	-	A	I
25.	Degree — Add or Discontinue	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	I
26.	Degree — Discontinue (Provost-proposed)	R	-	R	A	A	A	A	A	I

		Dept./School	College	Dean	AUAC	Provost	UGEC	University Faculty	Senior VPAA	President
	Change to General Education Requirements for Undergraduates (System)									
27.	Change course outcomes of an included course	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	A	I
28.	Add or drop a required course from the General Education Requirements	A	-	A	-	A	A	A	A	I
29.	Add or drop a course from a menu within the General Education Requirements	A	-	A	-	A	A	-	A	I
30.	Comprehensive revision of General Education Requirements	-	-	-	-	A	A	A	A	I

Notes

² Any change to a cross-listed course requires the signature of both department chairs or program directors overseeing the course to ensure that the courses stay in sync. This includes courses taught at other campuses (e.g. BIBL 101 and BIBO 101).

must include a minimum of 30 hours, and doctoral programs must include a minimum of 30 hours beyond the master's.

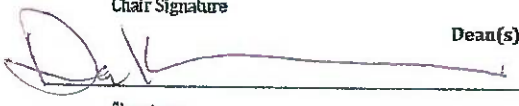
⁴ When a department/school or dean proposes closing a program, approval routing follows the typical process beginning with the department/school. An administrative proposal by the provost or senior vice president for academic affairs would follow the "provost-proposed" routing on the chart.

Updated 8/1/2023

 Department/School(s) 3/6/26
Chair Signature Date

Chair/Program Director Signature Date

 College Academic Council(s) 3/20/26
Chair Signature Date

Chair Signature Date
 Dean(s) 3/20/26
Signature Date

Signature Date

Teacher Education Council

Signature Date

Campus Academic Council:
Abilene Undergraduate or Abilene Graduate

Signature Date

Provost

Signature Date

Signature

Date

University General Education Council

Signature

Date

University Faculty

Abilene Faculty Senate Chair signature

Date

Dallas Faculty Council Chair signature

Date

Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Signature

Date

President

Signature

Date

Abilene New Course Application

You may delete the preceding instructional pages before submitting application.

Course ID (<i>Subject Code and Number</i>)	PLAW 410
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1. Systems and Catalog Information Complete each item.

A	Course Developer	Chris Riley
B	Course Instructor	Chris Riley
C	Course Title	Legal Studies Launch
D	Course Abbreviation for Banner if title is more than 30 characters	
E	College	CAHSS - Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences ▾
F	Department or School	Government and Criminal Justice
G	Number of Credit Hours	1 ▾
G1	Number of Lecture Contact Hours	0 ▾
G2	Number of Lab Contact Hours	0 ▾
H	Is the course for a fixed or variable number of credit hours?	Fixed ▾ If variable, explain rationale:
I	Is the course repeatable for additional credit?	No ▾
J	Maximum total number of credit hours a student can earn for this course	1
K	Course Schedule Type	Seminar (SEM) ▾ See Schedule Type definitions in the Reference section.
L	Number of Faculty Workload Hours	1 ▾
M	Grading Mode	Credit/No Credit (Undergraduate Only) ▾
N	Maximum Enrollment	20

O	Catalog Description (50 words or less)	This course is intended to support seniors in the law school application process. The course requires one-on-one meetings with the Pre-Law Advisor as well as readings and conversations related to transitioning to law school.
P	List any prerequisites (course/s, test scores, class standing, major, etc.)	Legal Studies Minor only and prerequisite PLAW 210 unless granted permission by the faculty
Q	List any corequisites (these <i>must</i> be taken at the same time; note that a single requirement cannot be both a prerequisite <i>and</i> a corequisite)	
R	If the course is cross-listed, specify the subject code and course number of the other course	
S	Does this course require any additional student course fees?	No If yes, attach a completed course fee form (see form "Request to Add or Change Course Fees").
T1	Will the course be offered in fall terms?	Yes, every year
T2	Will the course be offered in spring terms?	No
T3	Will the course be offered in summer terms?	No
U	First semester this course will be offered under new Course ID. <i>May not be earlier than the coming fall semester.</i>	Fall 2026

V	Is this course required for a program(s)?	Yes If yes, submit a separate completed curriculum proposal to change the program(s).
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W	Should the addition of this course be retroactively applied to the degree plan it supports? <i>This is rare, and rationale should explain compelling extenuating circumstances.</i>	Yes If yes, provide rationale: For students who have not yet completed PLAW 210, which is currently a 2-hour course. This will provide the best possible support for students applying to law school
X	Has this course been offered as a Special Topics course? <i>New courses are not required to be taught as Special Topics courses prior to approval.</i>	No If yes, provide course ID, term, and enrollment:
Y	List any courses in which the content overlaps the proposed course. (Course ID and Name). <i>Attach a statement from the instructor/dept chair of the existing course justifying the new offering.</i>	NA

2. Curriculum

- A. Explain any effects of this course on any degree plans. If the addition of the course alters program requirements, submit a separate Approval Chart for Curriculum Change to update the program.

Since its introduction in 22-23, the Legal Studies Minor has grown to over 50 current students. At the four-year mark, a refresh was due, which included talking to upperclassmen and relevant Academic Advisors early this semester. These changes also allow for the development of a year-to-year pathway to best support students in their law school application process, including the transition to law school, which is currently lacking. These changes include this new course in addition to the thematic menus that I hope will encourage more minors. To create a year-specific pathway for minors, PLAW 301 would become PLAW 210 in order to encourage students with sophomore standing to take the course. Additionally, in order to establish this new senior-level course (PLAW 410), the 301 (201) course would be reduced from 2 to 1 hour. A separate change for the Legal Studies Minor and 301 has been submitted.

B. Justify the addition of this course to the current curriculum, explaining the gap it meets.

See above.

3. Course Design

A. Audience and Course Goal

1. Describe the intended audience, including prerequisite skills.
2. State the overarching course goal(s) in performance terms.

B. Student Learning Outcomes and Measurements

	Student Learning Outcome	Measurement
1	Demonstrate readiness for legal education	Developing, refining, and submitting competitive law school applications
2	Engage intellectual disagreement	Articulating and applying a framework for navigating differences in legal education.
3	Develop scholarly awareness	Drafting a focused legal research question and abstract.
4	Prepare for the academic demands of the 1L year	Developing a personalized readiness plan

C. Text and Resources

Give the full publication information of the textbook/s and other required resources and outside readings. For **combined undergraduate/graduate** courses, make two lists: A. full publication information; label **Undergraduate**.

B. full publication information; label **Graduate**.

Inazu, John (2024). Learning to Disagree: The Surprising Path to Navigating Differences with Empathy and Respect.

Selected articles from Christian Legal Society, Journal of Christian Legal Thought.
Additional law review or journal articles selected by the student (with faculty approval).

4. Supporting Documentation

Required of all applications	
1	Approval Chart for Curriculum Changes
2	Syllabus — Attach the syllabus for the course based upon the anticipated first-semester offering.
4	Library — Submit new course application and syllabus to the Library dean's office. Attach the Library's memo.
Attach if applicable	

5	Content Overlap — Include one document for each course you listed in Section 1Y. Attach statement from instructor/dept chair of existing course justifying the new offering.
6	Departmental Resources — List the resources that support the course and are available only through the department, if applicable. Attach the list of the holdings and the location(s).
7	Resources — List resources (other than library or departmental resources) that are needed to support this course (computers, lab equipment, other technology, etc.). Attach a complete list of all items and indicate possible sources or estimated cost of each. List the sources of any needed funds.
8	Expenses — List additional expenses needed to implement this course (full-time or part-time faculty, graduate or lab assistants, student employees, travel, special student costs, room renovation, storage facility, etc.). Attach a complete list of all items, the estimated cost of each and the source of the funds.
9	Justification — Attach any documents to which you refer in Section 2B.

Updated 8/19/2024

PLAW 410: LEGAL STUDIES LAUNCH (1)

Fall 2026

Semester-Long (Hybrid Format)

Professor

Chris Riley, MPA, JD

Associate Professor of Government & Criminal Justice

University Pre-Law Advisor

Contact

Anytime at chris.riley@acu.edu

Face-to-face (by appointment)

Office: Hardin Administration Building 131

Description

This course is intended for senior Legal Studies minors who plan to attend law school. Topics and assignments are directly related to the timely completion of the law school application process and preparing for the intellectual, professional, and spiritual transition into legal education. The course requires one-on-one meetings with the Pre-Law Advisor as well as structured readings and guided conversations related to law school readiness.

The course is restricted to Legal Studies Minors who have previously taken PLAW 210, unless granted permission by the faculty.

Purpose

The mission of Abilene Christian University is to educate its students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world. The mission of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences is to educate students for worldwide Christian service and leadership through programs of study and learning experiences that blend liberal arts education with professional preparation; and the mission of the Department of Government and Criminal Justice is to provide a program of study that prepares students for informed and active participation in public service.

PLAW 410 serves as the capstone experience for Legal Studies minors.

Whereas earlier coursework focuses on experiential learning, discernment, and preparation, this course focuses on execution and transition. Students will complete finalized law school application materials through periodic meetings with faculty while also engaging in materials that develop the virtues necessary to thrive in rigorous legal education.

For example, most law schools operate within deeply pluralistic intellectual environments where students encounter classmates and professors who hold sharply divergent political, philosophical, and theological commitments. Christian students must therefore cultivate both conviction and charity, clarity and humility. This course prepares students to enter those environments faithfully, equipped to engage disagreement with courage, intellectual discipline, and respect. Rather than retreating from difference, through this course, students will learn to view it as an opportunity for growth, witness, and professional excellence.

Learning Outcomes

In this hybrid course, which will involve both one-on-one meetings with the student and professor as well as readings and oral and written reflections, the students will learn to:

- Demonstrate readiness for legal education by developing, refining, and submitting competitive law school applications
- Engage intellectual disagreement by articulating and applying a framework for navigating differences in legal education.
- Develop scholarly awareness by drafting a focused legal research question and abstract.
- Prepare for the academic demands of the 1L year by developing a personalized readiness plan.

Required Materials

Inazu, John (2024). *Learning to Disagree: The Surprising Path to Navigating Differences with Empathy and Respect*.

Selected articles from Christian Legal Society, Journal of Christian Legal Thought. Additional law review or journal articles selected by the student (with faculty approval).

Assignments

Your grade is based on completion of all course assignments. Assignments must be turned in on the date due to receive credit. No late work will receive credit unless specifically approved by the professor before the delay.

- 1) Monthly Meetings (20%) – During the semester, students will schedule a time to meet with the professor on at least a monthly-basis to discuss applications and assignments.
- 2) Application Portfolio Completion (30%) – Students will submit at least three law school applications by or before December 1, including: (1) LSAT scores; (2) finalizing personal statements and necessary addenda; (3) resume; (4) letters of recommendation; (5) applications; and any other required materials. Interim deadlines may be established between students and faculty. Assignments will not be individually graded. Instead, students will receive 10 points for every application that is submitted up to three. Proof of application completion from schools is required to receive credit.¹
- 3) Learning to Disagree (20%) – Students will read *Learning to Disagree* over the course of the semester and discuss the book with faculty as part of monthly meetings. Grade will be based on level of engagement.
- 4) Journal Abstract Project (15%) - Students will read at least one article from the Journal of Christian Legal Thought and one additional law review article of their current area of interest. Students will then draft a 300-500 word abstract for a paper that they might consider writing in law school.
- 5) Law School Readiness Plan (15%) – Students will create a readiness plan

to be implemented during the spring and summer prior to law school.² The plan must take into consideration their Rule of Life developed in PLAW 310: Legal Studies Seminar and include specific materials they will engage in, including at least one book relevant to law school preparation (a list of potential books will be provided); and a structured set of measurable goals and habits for academic, professional, and spiritual preparation before 1L. The plan must also include a 300–500-word reflection engaging ACU's mission and definition of vocation: "ACU educates students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world. While at ACU, students will learn who they are, who they are becoming, and how they will participate in God's purposes for the world." In other words, students should reflect on who they are entering law school, who they are becoming through this preparation process, and how they hope to participate in God's purposes through their vocation. Students will discuss the readiness plan with faculty during finals week.

¹ For students taking a gap-year, all component parts that can be completed at this time are required to receive credit.

² For students taking a gap-year, in addition to the above, the plan will describe how they are planning to use the gap-year, plans related to applying to law school.

Policies

Attendance - ACU expects students to attend all class sessions. To receive full credit, students must attend monthly meetings with the faculty member as described above.

Recording - Under no circumstances can meeting sessions be audio or video recorded in any manner without the express consent of the Professor and through prior arrangement. Any violation of this policy may result in the student being dropped from the course with a grade of "F".

Grade Scale - A (90-100%), B (80-89%), C (70-79%), D (60-69%), F (below 60%). Final grades will be rounded up to from the nearest whole number. For example, if a student earns a 89.5 or higher, they will receive an "A" in the course.

ADA Compliance Policy - Abilene Christian University is dedicated to removing barriers and opening access for students with disabilities in compliance with ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The ACU website provides more information at <https://acu.edu/about/uap/overview-2/about-2/>.

Please contact me to discuss any approved accommodations that you require for this class.

Title IX Policy - At ACU, we strive to comply with all applicable legal requirements prohibiting, preventing, and responding to sexual misconduct against any member of the ACU community. The full Title IX policy and process can be found at

<https://acu.edu/human-resources/title-ix-and-sexual-misconduct-information/>.

Academic Integrity Policy - Academic integrity is demonstrated by behavior that honors the learning environment, regardless of setting, context, location or modality. ACU's Academic Integrity Policy can be found at

<https://acu.edu/office-of-the-provost/academic-policies/>.

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: February 18, 2026

TO: Chris Riley

FROM: Dr. Mark McCallon, Associate Dean for Library Services

RE: PLAW 410 – Legal Studies Launch

The Library supports the proposed course. Thank you for letting us review the course syllabus and application.