

Department of Classical Studies
Course Outline
Law and Litigation in Ancient Rome
AUTUMN 2026



INSTRUCTOR: Dr. K. Olson (kolson2@uwo.ca) she/her

OFFICE: Lawson Hall 3227 (661-2111 x 84525)

OFFICE HOURS: Mondays, 4:00 -5:00 PM or by appointment

TIME OF CLASS: MWF 11:30 AM – 12:20 PM

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course examines the legal system of ancient Rome. We will examine the rules, procedures, and institutions of classical Roman law, the influence of social norms and political and cultural traditions on law, and the function of law in Roman society. To this end we will look closely at primary sources for what they can tell us of law and litigation: both Roman laws themselves and forensic speeches from antiquity. Among the topics covered will be the laws governing wills and property disputes, marriage, property, slavery and commerce, as well as homicide, sexuality, and assault.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Riggsby, A. M. *Roman Law and The Legal World of the Romans* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010, ppk. \$48.95)
- **All other readings:** please go to the ‘course readings’ section of our OWL site.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

On successful completion of this course students are expected to be able to:

- have acquired a knowledge of ancient Roman law and litigation practices and how law worked within ancient society as a whole
- read, comprehend, and sum up ancient literary sources in translation concerning Roman law
- summarize how Roman law changed over time

LEARNING OUTCOMES/TRANSFERABLE SKILLS:

Students completing this course are expected to have acquired:

- an understanding of the importance of historical perspective
- a knowledge of how social norms and customs and the construction of law are products of time, events and context
- a developed understanding of the limits of primary evidence as embodying actual historical fact

GRADES

In-class writing assignments (problems in Roman law) 15% x 2=	30%
One in-class exam	30%
Final exam (scheduled by the Registrar)	40%

****Please note that this assessment is central to the learning objectives for this course. Accordingly, students seeking academic consideration for this assessment will be required to provide formal supporting documentation. Students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment will be provided with the opportunity to make up this work by a make-up exam.**

ESSAY AND EXAMS:

The in-class exam and the final exam are designed to test the students' knowledge of textbook reading and lectures. Information on the two writing assignment topics (problems in Roman law) will be provided in class.

NOTES TO STUDENTS:

1. Since tests are given in class time, there can be no conflicts. **More than one test on the same day does not constitute a conflict.** Plan your schedule ahead of time.
2. Those who miss classes or parts of classes remain responsible for the material they have missed. I will not review the contents of lectures or repeat announcements for those who arrive late or miss classes. I post **very** basic powerpoints on OWL, but class attendance is still **essential** to understand the details of the lecture.
3. The final grade is calculated on the basis of your performance on the tests, the essay, and final examination **only**. **You cannot do an extra assignment to make up for a poor performance on a test or the final examination.** Nor can I re-weight grades unless I hear from your academic counsellor. All missed exams and assignments will be comprised of make-ups.

4. If a lecture and its readings appears on the syllabus, **that lecture and readings will appear on the midterm and final exam**, regardless of whether the lecture is given in-person, uploaded as a document to our OWL site, or recorded and uploaded to the OWL site.
5. Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates **as well as** their UWO email. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.
6. Please note the **study questions** posted on our OWL site. We will go over some of these in class, but you are responsible for making sure you have answered all of them. I will draw freely on these for exam purposes.
7. I will also post **handouts and other study aids** on OWL, so check the site regularly.

IMPORTANT POLICIES:

Note from the Dean of Arts and Humanities

You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as basis of appeal. If you are not eligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time, and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. These decisions cannot be appealed.

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Religious Accommodation requests for final exams should be submitted via the Student Absence Portal.

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.”

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity.

“Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students” https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

****PLEASE NOTE that your accommodations must be in place by the time you write the exam. I do not allow make-ups based on the fact that your accommodations didn't come through in time.**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, here:

https://uwo.ca/univsec//pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or

medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

Academic Advising

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

<https://registrar.uwo.ca/facultyacademiccounselling.html>

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services>.

Academic Consideration

Students must familiarize themselves with the University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs posted on the Academic Calendar:

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for attempted or completed work, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult Accessible Education.

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:

<https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

AI

No generative AI programs are to be used in this course.

COURSE OUTLINE: to come