COMMUNICATIONS LAW

Broadly defined, the study of communications law encompasses the laws and regulations concerning the various means of communicating with the public (e.g., newspapers, radio, television, internet, and other mass communication media) and the mechanisms by which people communicate privately with each other (e.g., telephone, email, and cellular). Somewhat more narrowly, the study of communications law often focuses on the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, which authorizes the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to license and regulate broadcast stations, to regulate (with local jurisdictions) the provision of cable television, and to oversee the rates, terms, and conditions under which common carriers (e.g., phone companies) serve the public.

Students interested in an overview of or introduction to communications law should take the survey course, Communications Law and Policy. The course examines the regulation of broadcasting, cable, wireline and wireless telephony, and broadband and internet communications, following the structure of regulation defined by the Communications Act of 1934 as amended over the years, particularly by the Telecommunication Act of 1996.

Students who want to examine some of these issues in more detail or who wish to explore related communications issues should take some of the more specialized courses and seminars such as:

- Communications Law: Law and Policy in the Internet Age
- Law of Cyberspace
- Free Press Seminar
- Information Privacy Law
- The practicum courses listed on the right may also be of interest.

Students interested in experiencing the practice of communications law have a unique opportunity to do so in one of the clinics – the Communications and Technology Law Clinic (IFR). The Communications and Technology Law clinic practices in the area of public interest communications law. The goal of this practice is to make the communications media accessible, diverse, and responsive to the needs of all segments of the community. In the clinic, students represent advocacy, consumer, and civil rights organizations before the Federal Communications Commission and the federal courts. Some of the issues that students have worked on over the past several years include support of lower telephone rates for prison payphones, online public disclosure by broadcast studios of sponsors for political advertisements, media ownership rules, children’s online privacy, low-power FM radio, access to telecommunications by persons with disabilities, and supporting robust network neutrality. Students in the clinic increase their substantive knowledge of communications law, and at the same time, have an opportunity to do a substantial amount of legal research, analysis and writing, interact with clients, and consider the professional responsibilities that arise in public interest law practice.

We recommend that students interested in communications law also take Constitutional Law II to gain a greater understanding of free speech issues, Antitrust Law to understand how agencies such as the FCC operate, and Copyright Law to learn how to analyze the industry structure issues that play a major role in communications law. Copyright Law also considers issues related to communications law.

Search Communications Law Courses (http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?cluster=cluster_7)

LAW 025 v00 Administrative Law (http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%20025%20v00)
J.D. Course (cross-listed) | 3 credit hours
This course considers the constitutional, statutory, and other legal limitations on what government agencies can do and how they can do it. What constraints govern the power of agencies to make law, decide cases involving private parties, and investigate citizens? How much "due process" must government agencies give citizens whose lives they affect; what limits has Congress imposed on the procedures for agency decision making; and to what extent can people call on courts to check what they regard as abuses of governmental power? These are among the questions addressed in the course, which draws together problems ranging from the legitimacy of New Deal institutions to the dramatic procedural innovations of recent federal administrations and problems created by renewed Congressional interest in the details of agency decision making.

Recommended: For Professor Nager’s section: Prior or concurrent enrollment in Constitutional Law I: The Federal System.

Mutually Excluded Courses: Students may not receive credit for both this course and the first-year elective by the same name or the first-year course, Government Processes.

Note: For students registered in Professor Krishnakumar’s Fall 2023 section: This class will have a take-home exam that will be administered on December 5, 2023.

LAW 025 v06 Administrative Law (http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%20025%20v06)
J.D. Course | 3 credit hours
This course is designed to introduce you to the core institutions and processes of the modern administrative state. You will come to understand the tremendous power exercised by administrative agencies as well as the significant constraints under which they operate. You will learn the procedures governing the key categories of administrative action; the doctrine governing judicial review of administrative action; and non-judicial mechanisms of agency control within the Constitution's separation-of-powers framework.

Learning Goals: By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1) Identify the legal framework (statutory, constitutional, doctrinal) that applies to a particular issue of administrative action;

2) Apply the relevant legal framework to a given set of facts; and

3) Evaluate the merits of the legal framework against a variety of normative goals.

You should also (4) be conversant in contemporary debates about the administrative state and be able to articulate and justify your views.

Mutually Excluded Courses: Students may not receive credit for this course and the upperclass course with the same title.

Note: This course is a first-year elective. First-year day students select an elective offered in the spring.
The Sherman Act of 1890 to Today’s Progressive Movement.

This class will serve as a basic survey and introduction to U.S. antitrust law. This course introduces you to the role of administrative agencies and how law and political factors shape their powers and work. This includes materials on how they are empowered and constrained by the Constitution, Congress, presidents, and the courts. We also study ways in which agencies generate law and develop policies. This class coverage includes, among other topics, materials on citizens’ abilities to petition, shape, and litigate over agency actions; changing views of presidents’ roles and powers over agencies; and statutory factors and doctrine shaping judicial review of agency law interpretation, reasoning, responsiveness, policy shifts, and engagement with science and facts.

**Mutually Excluded Courses:** Students may not receive credit for both this course and the first-year elective by the same name or the first-year course, Government Processes.

**LAW 1349 v01 Administrative Law**

This course introduces you to the modern administrative and regulatory state. You will come to understand both the tremendous power exercised by administrative agencies and the significant constraints (legal and political) under which they operate. You will learn to identify the design features that might make an agency constitutionally problematic, the factors that make one type of decision-making framework more appropriate than another, the prerogatives and limits of agencies in interpreting the statutes they are charged with administering, and agencies’ prerogatives and limits in adjudicating facts and exercising policymaking discretion. You will also learn to identify the factors that affect the availability and timing of judicial review of agency action.

**Mutually Excluded Courses:** Students may not receive credit for both this course and the upperclass course with the same title.

**Note:** This course is a first-year elective. First-year day students select an elective offered in the spring.

**LAW 025 v08 Administrative Law**

Virtually all areas of law today involve a substantial element of administrative law. This course introduces you to the role of administrative agencies and how law and political factors shape their powers and work. This includes materials on how they are empowered and constrained by the Constitution, Congress, presidents, and the courts. We also study ways in which agencies generate law and develop policies. This class coverage includes, among other topics, materials on citizens’ abilities to petition, shape, and litigate over agency actions; changing views of presidents’ roles and powers over agencies; and statutory factors and doctrine shaping judicial review of agency law interpretation, reasoning, responsiveness, policy shifts, and engagement with science and facts.

**Mutually Excluded Courses:** Students may not receive credit for both this course and the upperclass course with the same title.

**LAW 038 v05 Antitrust Law**

This class will serve as a basic survey and introduction to U.S. antitrust law, including coverage of recent critiques and policy developments. As such, the reading will include the traditional case law, but also some examples of proposed legislation and contemporary advocacy material from policy activists. Thus, we will learn the basics of antitrust doctrine but also seek to understand the merits (or lack thereof) of contemporary critiques and proposed policy responses.

**Mutually Excluded Courses:** Students may not receive credit for both this course and Antitrust Economics and Law or Antitrust Law: A Survey from the Sherman Act of 1890 to Today’s Progressive Movement.

**LAW 528 v01 Communications and Technology Law Clinic (IPR)**

This course will examine the historical, current, and prospective legal and regulatory treatment of communications services, devices, service providers, and platforms. Focusing on current regulatory and policy developments, we will cover issues concerning telephone companies, wireless carriers, Internet application and service providers, device manufacturers, and broadband network operators. The emphasis of the course will be on the rules, policies, and processes of the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”), but we also will discuss the roles of Congress, courts, and the Executive Branch. Once armed with a firm background in existing statutory and regulatory requirements, students will explore current legal and policy questions regarding communications law. In particular, our focus this semester will be on the structure and functions of the FCC, mobile broadband networks; recent debates surrounding the regulation of broadband networks and online platforms; and some special “hot topics.”

**Mutually Excluded Courses:** Students may not concurrently enroll in this clinic and an externship or a practicum course.

**LAW 1835 v00 Communications Law**

This course introduces you to the role of administrative agencies and how law and political factors shape their powers and work. This includes materials on how they are empowered and constrained by the Constitution, Congress, presidents, and the courts. We also study ways in which agencies generate law and develop policies. This class coverage includes, among other topics, materials on citizens’ abilities to petition, shape, and litigate over agency actions; changing views of presidents’ roles and powers over agencies; and statutory factors and doctrine shaping judicial review of agency law interpretation, reasoning, responsiveness, policy shifts, and engagement with science and facts.

**Mutually Excluded Courses:** Students may not concurrently enroll in this clinic and an externship or a practicum course.

**LAW 025 v08 Administrative Law**

Virtually all areas of law today involve a substantial element of administrative law. This course introduces you to the role of administrative agencies and how law and political factors shape their powers and work. This includes materials on how they are empowered and constrained by the Constitution, Congress, presidents, and the courts. We also study ways in which agencies generate law and develop policies. This class coverage includes, among other topics, materials on citizens’ abilities to petition, shape, and litigate over agency actions; changing views of presidents’ roles and powers over agencies; and statutory factors and doctrine shaping judicial review of agency law interpretation, reasoning, responsiveness, policy shifts, and engagement with science and facts.

**Mutually Excluded Courses:** Students may not receive credit for both this course and the upperclass course with the same title.

**LAW 1349 v01 Administrative Law**

This course introduces you to the modern administrative and regulatory state. You will come to understand both the tremendous power exercised by administrative agencies and the significant constraints (legal and political) under which they operate. You will learn to identify the design features that might make an agency constitutionally problematic, the factors that make one type of decision-making framework more appropriate than another, the prerogatives and limits of agencies in interpreting the statutes they are charged with administering, and agencies’ prerogatives and limits in adjudicating facts and exercising policymaking discretion. You will also learn to identify the factors that affect the availability and timing of judicial review of agency action.

**Mutually Excluded Courses:** Students may not receive credit for both this course and the upperclass course with the same title.

**Note:** This course is a first-year elective. First-year day students select an elective offered in the spring.

**LAW 038 v05 Antitrust Law**

This class will serve as a basic survey and introduction to U.S. antitrust law, including coverage of recent critiques and policy developments. As such, the reading will include the traditional case law, but also some examples of proposed legislation and contemporary advocacy material from policy activists. Thus, we will learn the basics of antitrust doctrine but also seek to understand the merits (or lack thereof) of contemporary critiques and proposed policy responses.

**Mutually Excluded Courses:** Students may not receive credit for both this course and Antitrust Economics and Law or Antitrust Law: A Survey from the Sherman Act of 1890 to Today’s Progressive Movement.
The advent of the Internet has spawned massive leaps in technology and the way Americans use communications services to reach that technology. This course examines how courts, legislatures, and regulatory agencies react to constant change in communications technologies. We will focus on specific technological advances to explore the way legal, economic, social, and technological forces shape and are harnessed by legal systems faced with challenges to the status quo. The course will draw on leading communications law cases, statutes, and FCC and FTC actions. Students will explore the legal and lobbying battles raging today in Washington and across the world that are fueled by technological change, in areas such as net neutrality, privacy, broadband subsidy, competition, and spectrum policy. We will try to focus in particular on questions currently before the courts, the FCC and Congress. Note that the focus of readings and in-class discussion is on physical communications technology, not on policies relating specifically to social media sites (although such topics are not out-of-bounds for paper topics). The goal is to deepen each student’s understanding of major communications law topics, to determine if a comparison of these topics reveals a set of common legal, policy, and political reactions to technological change, and to provide future policymakers with the tools to respond to change more effectively.

The class will meet for two hours once per week. Grades will be based on class participation (25%) and a final paper/oral presentation (75%). There are no course prerequisites. While there is overlap with Communications Law and Policy on several issues, we cover different issues in total. For students with no communications law background, we will cover the basic background on the law and policy needed to understand the issues addressed.

Learning Objectives:

- Deepen each student’s understanding of major communications policy topics in dispute.
- Determine if a comparison of these topics reveals a set of common legal, policy, and political reactions to technological change.
- Provide future policymakers with the tools to respond to change more effectively.
- Provide insight to the role legal constraints play in policy debates and policy plays in legal challenges.
- Improve oral and written advocacy skills through writing and presenting an advocacy white paper.

Note: This seminar requires a paper. J.D. students must register for the 3 credit section of the seminar if they wish to write a paper fulfilling the Upperclass Legal Writing Requirement. The paper requirements of the 2 credit section will not fulfill the J.D. Upperclass Legal Writing Requirement.
Communications Law

LAW 080 v00 Computer Crime Law (http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%20080%20v00)
J.D. Course (cross-listed) | 2 credit hours
This course will explore the legal issues that judges, legislators, prosecutors, and defense attorneys confront as they respond to the recent dramatic increase in computer-related crime. In particular, we will consider how crimes online challenge traditional approaches to the investigation, prosecution, and defense of crime that have evolved from our experience with crimes in physical space. Topics will include: the Fourth Amendment online, the law of electronic surveillance, computer hacking and other computer crimes, cyberterrorism, the First Amendment and the Internet, and civil liberties online.

Although much of this class involves computer and internet technology, no prior technical background or knowledge is required.

Any technology that needs to be understood will be explained in class, and students should not hesitate to ask for other technical explanations.

LAW 215 v00 Constitutional Law II: Individual Rights and Liberties (http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%20215%20v00)
J.D. Course (cross-listed) | 4 credit hours
This course focuses primarily on the First, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendments (free speech, due process, and equal protection) and the role of the Supreme Court as ultimate interpreter and guardian of the Bill of Rights.

Note for Professor Barnett’s Fall section: As a way to understand the structure of current doctrines, Professor Barnett’s course will stress how and why the doctrines evolved from the Founding through the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Progressive Era, the New Deal, the Warren and Rehnquist Courts to the Roberts Court today. The course will also stress the effect that slavery had on the original Constitution and the Reconstruction Amendments. Coverage will include the Second and Ninth Amendments. Professor Barnett’s section will consist of a 3-hour unit consisting of two 85 minute class sessions and a 1-hour unit consisting of video presentations on the theory and practice of originalism that students can view at their convenience at any time before or during the semester. Internet access on any device is not allowed during class; all laptop use is disallowed in Professor Barnett’s course (unless necessary to conduct Zoom instruction).

Learning goals for Professor Spann’s section

The primary goal of the course is to teach students how to manipulate the doctrinal rules and underlying policy considerations that govern the topics in the course, and to get students to confront the normative implications raised by such vast amounts of doctrinal indeterminacy, especially for the law’s claim of neutrality toward subordinated groups.

LAW 1846 v00 Contemporary Free Speech Problems (http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%201846%20v00)
J.D. Seminar (cross-listed) | 2 credit hours
Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech,” commands the First Amendment. This course explores how that charge has played out in practice by analyzing some of the most challenging free speech issues of our day. Topics include: incitement, threats, hate speech, protests, boycotts, aiding and abetting, suppression and retaliation by public officials, anonymous speech, compelled speech, the speech rights of social media platforms, algorithms, facial recognition, artificial intelligence, and speech about abortion post-Dobbs. Students will delve into the relevant legal doctrine, as well as its theoretical and analytical underpinnings, while also developing skills as advocates by applying that doctrine to actual cases. Students will be expected to make meaningful contributions to class discussion.

Learning Outcomes:

(1) Students will develop a deep understanding of the core First Amendment/free speech case law relevant to the problems we study as well as the theory undergirding the protections for free speech.

(2) Students will develop skills as advocates in applying that body of case law and underlying theoretical principles to current complex problems, including actual cases I have handled as a practitioner.

Recommended: Constitutional Law
LAW 3144 v00 Federal Advocacy in Technology Law and Policy
(http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%203144%20v00)
LL.M Seminar (cross-listed) | 2 credit hours
Students who take this course will better understand stakeholder politics; federal legislative, regulatory, and enforcement processes; and the advocacy skills needed to achieve policy outcomes in the interrelated fields of technology, telecommunications, and media (“TTM”). Students will gain hands-on experience practicing technology advocacy. The course first reviews key issues in technology policy and advocacy, such as competition, content moderation, net neutrality, privacy, AI & bias, and cybersecurity.

Armed with the basics of current technology policy issues, students then learn advocacy tools to “make” technology policy. Students will review and draft collateral materials used for technology policy advocacy, including white papers, talking points, comments, “op/eds,” earned media coverage, and more, gaining an appreciation for the differences from, and complementary relationship with, traditional legal materials and legal practice. Students will be introduced to the legislative process (committee hearings and markups, bicameral action, budget procedure); independent agency rulemaking and adjudication (comments, ex parte presentations, Administration and congressional input); relevant enforcement proceedings (Department of Justice and Federal Trade Commission merger review); and related advocacy in the courts (amicus briefs).

This is a skill-intensive course with writing assignments, workshops, presentations, peer support, and simulations. It will have a final assessment with a written and oral component. There are no prerequisite courses required. Classes will incorporate pre-class preparations and in-class skill-building exercises.

**Mutually Excluded Courses:** Students may not receive credit for both this course and Technology Policy and Practice.

LAW 342 v03 Information Privacy Law
(http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%20342%20v03)
J.D. Course (cross-listed) | 3 credit hours
This course provides an introduction to information privacy law both on the books and on the ground. Topics covered include the common law, constitutional, and statutory foundations of U.S. information privacy law; philosophical bases for privacy protection; first amendment constraints on privacy law; information privacy compliance, enforcement, and regulatory practice; the European approach to privacy and data protection; privacy constraints on law enforcement activities; cybersecurity; and cross-border data flows. Special attention will be paid to issues raised by the information economy.

Learning goals for this course: Critical mastery of the existing doctrinal, statutory, regulatory, and policy landscapes and the complex interrelationships among them; critical mastery of the privacy compliance considerations that confront both private- and public-sector organizations; introduction to European information privacy and data protection law and the relationship between privacy and global information flows.

**Note:** Note for Professor Cohen’s Fall 2023 section: This course will not meet on 10/12, 10/26 and 11/21. To make up for the cancelled classes, this course will meet from 1:20 p.m. - 3:20 p.m. on the following dates: 9/21, 9/26, 10/5, 11/14, 11/16, and 11/28. There will also be a makeup class on Friday, October 20, 11:10 a.m. - 12:35 p.m.

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LAW 196 v03 Free Press
(http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%20196%20v03)
J.D. Course (cross-listed) | 2 credit hours
"Congress shall make no law . . . ;" the First Amendment commands, "abridging the freedom . . . of the press." But Congress, the Executive Branch, and the courts have promulgated a host of laws governing both print and electronic media. This survey of mass media law explores such current topics as prior restraints on publication, defamation, privacy, newsgathering liability, media liability for unlawful conduct of third parties, compelled disclosure of sources, and access to information. Practical aspects of representing media clients are examined along with public policy implications of existing legal doctrines and proposals for change. Much of the course is discussion-based, and students will be expected to make meaningful contributions to that discussion, with class participation forming the basis for one-fourth of the grade for the semester.

**Recommended:** Constitutional Law II: Individual Rights and Liberties.

**Note:** THIS COURSE REQUIRES THE PROFESSORS’ PERMISSION TO ENROLL. Students should complete a brief Google form found here (https://forms.gle/ChfyTg2hoED9KE9r6) with a short explanation of their interest in the course by 5:00 p.m. on June 13, 2023. Thereafter, the professors will admit students into open seats from the waitlist on a rolling basis. PLEASE NOTE: This course will not be offered during the 2024-25 academic year.
LAW 1517 v00 The GDPR: Background, Development, and Consequences
(http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%201517%20v00)
J.D. Seminar (cross-listed) | 1 credit hour
This course provides an intensive introduction to the General Data Protection Regulation - the EU's influential comprehensive data protection law. The class will review foundational Articles of the Regulation, background materials, and related EU law developments. The course explores the development of privacy law in the modern democratic state, assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the Regulation including challenges for implementation and compliance, and examines the relationship to other emerging EU privacy laws.

Learning Objectives:

The aim of this class is to provide:

- A general understanding of the historical and political circumstances that gave rise to the adoption of the GDPR
- A general understanding of the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation
- A general understanding of current developments related to the GDPR, including the status of the EU-US Data Protection Framework
- A focused understanding of key provisions in the GDPR, including collective actions, data protection impact assessments, algorithmic transparency, the role of supervisory authorities, and the creation of the European Data Protection Board
- An introduction to related legal frameworks, including the Council of Europe Convention 108 (The "Privacy Convention"), the OECD Privacy Guidelines, and the OECD AI Guidelines
- A brief introduction to regulatory theory, "ratcheting up," and the "California/Brussels effect"
- An examination of emerging issues including Artificial Intelligence and the EU AI Act

Recommended: Information Privacy Law.

Note: In Spring 2024, this class will meet on the following seven Thursdays: 1/18, 2/1, 2/8, 2/15, 2/29, 3/7, and 3/21.

LAW 1019 v00 The Law of Public Utilities: Bringing Competition to Historically Monopolistic Industries
(http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%201019%20v00)
J.D. Seminar | 2-3 credit hours
Our major infrastructural industries—electricity, gas, telecommunications, transportation and water—were historically controlled by monopolies. Since the 1980s, efforts to introduce competition into these industries have met obstacles. Battles before legislative bodies, regulatory agencies and courts, at the state and federal levels, have produced a distinct body of law. That body of law—the law of introducing competition into historically monopolistic industries—is the subject of this course.

From the principles learned in the course, students have written papers on such diverse topics as renewable energy, internet, movie production, chicken slaughtering, student loans, pharmaceutical research, Uber, Flint’s water crisis, utility corporate form, law school admissions, farms seeds and insecticide, Youtube, private space travel, rare minerals used in solar and wind facilities, Facebook, cloud storage, electric storage, and telemedicine at the VA. Some of these papers have made their way into professional journals or law journals.

Regardless of the industry or era, the regulation of infrastructural monopolies and their competitors has five common elements: its mission (to align business performance with the public interest); its legal principles (ranging from the state law on exclusive monopoly franchise to federal constitutional protection of shareholder investment); policy flexibility (accommodating multiple public purposes, from service reliability to environmental accountability to protection of vulnerable citizens); reliance on multiple professional disciplines (law, economics, finance, accounting, management, engineering and politics); and formal administrative procedures, such as adjudication and rulemaking.

Today, political challenges are causing policymakers to stretch regulation's core legal principles. Four examples of these challenges are: climate change (e.g., To what extent should we make utilities and their customers responsible for “greening” energy production and consumption?); universal service (e.g., Should we bring broadband to every home, and at whose cost?); privacy (How do regulators induce personal changes in energy consumption while protecting the related data from public exposure?); and protection of our infrastructure from hackers, terrorists and natural catastrophes.

Complicating these political challenges are two sources of constant tension: ideology (e.g., private vs. public ownership, government intervention vs. "free market"); and state-federal relations (e.g., Which aspects of utility service are "national," requiring uniformity; and which are "local," warranting state experimentation?).

This field has many jobs, as new issues emerge and as baby boomers retire. Lawyers play varied roles. They advise clients who are suppliers or customers of regulated services, represent parties before regulatory tribunals, advise those tribunals or their legislative overseers, and challenge or defend those tribunals on judicial review.

Note: The 3-credit Writing Requirement section of this course is restricted to J.D. students only. The 2-credit Paper section of this course is restricted to LL.M. students only.

Full-time Faculty

Erin Carroll
Anupam Chander
Julie E. Cohen