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 wish 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, Administrative Law to understand how agencies such as the FCC operate, and Antitrust 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.
LAW 025 v08 Administrative Law (http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%20025%20v08)

J.D. Course | 3 credit hours
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 first-year elective by the same name or the first-year course, Government Processes.

LAW 1349 v00 Administrative Law (http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%201349%20v00)

J.D. Course (cross-listed) | 3 credit hours
There is no more fundamental course in law school than 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 v01 Antitrust Law (http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%20038%20v01)

J.D. Course (cross-listed) | 3 credit hours
This course covers the major federal legislation in the field of antitrust law, with a primary focus upon governmental efforts to promote competition, including Sections 1 and 2 of the Sherman Act, and Section 7 of the Clayton Act. Emphasis is placed upon the growing role of economic analysis and other modern trends in judicial interpretation, with an emphasis on understanding the means by which courts determine whether unilateral and collaborative business conduct is pro-competitive or anticompetitive, regardless of the particular statutory provision at issue.

**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.

Note: J.D. Students: Registration for this course will be open to Evening Division students only during the initial J.D. student registration windows. Full-time Day Division students will be able to add or waitlist this course beginning at 9:30 a.m. ET on July 14.
LAW 528 v01 Communications and Technology Law Clinic (IPR) (http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%20528%20v01)
J.D. Clinic | 12 credit hours
Please see the Communications and Technology Law Clinic (IPR) website (https://www.law.georgetown.edu/experiential-learning/clinics/communications-technology-law-clinic-ipr) for more detailed information about the program.

For registration-specific supplemental materials, please see the Communications and Technology Law Clinic (IPR) PDF (https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/u4zs8qrh1x5kywox56mo7xgdakvr0gu).

For information about clinic registration generally, please see the Clinic Registration Handbook (https://georgetown.box.com/s/y9f8wg3jqcuynevip3tyt8j6nj6pyv6).

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

LAW 073 v02 Communications Law and Policy (http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%20073%20v02)
J.D. Course | 3 credit hours
This course is intended to help students understand the policy issues that underlie the regulation of communications industries, become familiar with the fundamental approaches to communications regulation and judicial review of that regulation, and evaluate the successes and failures of recent reforms. The course will address regulation of broadcasting, cable, wireline and wireless telephony, and broadband and Internet communications. Sections begin with a brief history of communications regulation and discuss the fundamental legal and policy decisions that have evolved through the present day. The course seeks to understand in what instances the government should intervene in the marketplace. When intervention occurs, the course seeks to evaluate government’s most appropriate role in broadcast regulation, telephone regulation, wireless spectrum issues, cable television regulation and broadband regulation. We will discuss the powers of local, state, and federal regulators and attempt to identify the jurisdictional boundaries among them. The course explores the regulatory theory underlying the Communications Act of 1934 and the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and attempts to predict the regulatory models that should govern the 21st century.

LAW 200 v01 Communications Law: Law and Policy in the Internet Age (http://curriculum.law.georgetown.edu/course-search/?keyword=LAW%20200%20v01)
J.D. Seminar (cross-listed) | 2-3 credit hours
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.
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.

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 (free speech, due process, and equal protection) and the role of the Supreme Court as ultimate interpreter and guardian of the Bill of Rights.

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.

J.D. Course (cross-listed) | 3 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.

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. 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.


Students may not receive credit for both this course and Technology Policy and Practice.

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-third of the grade for the semester.

LAW 342 v03 Information Privacy Law
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 constitutional, common law, and consumer protection foundations of U.S. information privacy law; the European approach to privacy and data protection; the “life cycle of data,” with particular regard to regulatory issues and new challenges posed by algorithmic and/or data-driven practices; and sectoral privacy regimes in national security, employment, health, education, finance, and communications.

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; awareness of international differences in the treatment of information privacy issues and some comparative exposure to European information privacy and data protection law in particular.

Note: Please note that laptop computers are not permitted in class.

LAW 342 v05 Information Privacy Law
J.D. Course (cross-listed) | 3 credit hours
This course serves as an introduction to the field of “information privacy law.” The goal of the course is to equip students with the vocabulary, legal toolkit, and conceptual knowledge to enter the this rapidly-expanding area of law as a practitioner, an academic, or something in between. The course will trace the development and meanings of privacy in American law from the famous 1890 Harvard Law Review article “The Right to Privacy” by Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis to the modern problems of privacy in the information age. Particular emphasis will be placed upon modern policy problems involving privacy, including privacy and the media, Fourth Amendment law, health privacy, Internet privacy, FTC regulation, emerging technologies, the problems caused by government and private-sector databases, and the prospects of federal privacy reform in 2021. The focus of the course is on US law, but we will necessarily examine the internationalization of the field, including the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the “Right to Be Forgotten.” Attendance and participation are essential.

LAW 267 v04 Law of Cyberspace
J.D. Course (cross-listed) | 3 credit hours
This course examines legal and policy issues arising from the Internet, with an emphasis on three broad areas: (1) the impact of the Internet on traditional legal causes of action; (2) government regulation of the Internet; (3) international aspects of the Internet and the interplay among United States and foreign jurisdictions.

Specific areas that will be examined within this framework include: constitutional issues raised by cyberspace speech and content; privacy issues; torts occurring in cyberspace; contract and other issues related to cyberspace commerce; and the protection of intellectual property in cyberspace.

Course readings rely primarily on cases, pleadings, statutes, and regulations. However, short articles and commentaries will also be used for background and supplementary information. There are no prerequisites for the course, and a computer background is not necessary.

LAW 1605 v00 Technology and the Free Press Seminar
J.D. Seminar | 3 credit hours
In the past two decades, technology has dramatically changed the American press. The Internet and mobile devices have revolutionized the creation and consumption of news. The economic structure supporting the press, and newspapers in particular, has crumbled. Readers are finding more of their news through platforms like Google, Facebook, and YouTube. Even though these companies have disavowed the “media” label, they play editorial roles—deciding what speech is allowed into the new public square and even shaping that speech.

These rapid changes lead to numerous legal questions: What is the “free press” in an era when journalists are pushed to amass clicks? Who is a journalist when access to publication technology has been democratized? Are reporter shield laws still relevant when technology allows the government to covertly spy on journalists? Does law have a role to play in combatting so-called “fake news”? Can and should the First Amendment (or other law) protect the press from being squeezed by technology platforms? More generally, what is law’s role in protecting journalists, the press, or the journalistic process? This course aims to encourage deep thinking, discussion, and writing about the answers to these questions.

Among the learning objectives for this course are: developing an understanding of how the law conceives of the press, journalists, and the audience for news; determining what legal questions arise as a result of how technology is impacting the press; creatively considering whether and how law can address these questions; improving legal research techniques as well as the ability to closely read and analyze both scholarly work and legal authorities; developing, organizing, and writing a seminar paper that is not merely descriptive but sets forth a thesis and defends it; and refining the ability to give and receive feedback as we workshop drafts.
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
- 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”
- Authoritative reference materials that will aid students as they undertake future work on the GDPR, including Rothenberg, Privacy Law Sourcebook, which includes the text of the GDPR
- An analysis of the relationship between the GDPR and other emerging EU laws, such as the Digital Services Act, Digital Markets Act, the EU Data Act, and the e-Privacy Regulation

Recommended: Information Privacy Law.

Note: In Spring 2023, this class will meet on the following seven Thursdays: 1/19, 2/2, 2/9, 2/16, 3/2, 3/9, and 3/23.

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

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