



Federation of
Law Societies
of Canada

NCA National Committee
on Accreditation

Syllabus

Foundations of Canadian Law

Revised for July 2025

Candidates are advised that the syllabus may be updated from time-to-time without prior notice.

Candidates are responsible for obtaining the most current syllabus available.

V9



Foundations of Canadian Law

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

- To provide NCA applicants with an introduction to and an overview of Canada's legal system and the role of law in Canadian society;
- To review various legal theories as they apply to Canadian law;
- To introduce the overarching legal framework within which the particular areas of law studied in other courses operate;
- To acquaint applicants with the various sources of Canadian law;
- To compare the different branches of Canadian government and to analyze the relationships between and among them;
- To provide applicants with an understanding of the Canadian treaty-making process and the implementation of international law into domestic law;
- To provide applicants with an understanding of the special relationship Aboriginal Peoples have with the Canadian State, and to enable applicants to critically assess the impact of the Canadian legal system upon Aboriginal and other minority communities;
- To provide applicants with an understanding of the nature and function of judicial review and of the basic approaches to statutory interpretation.

EVALUATION

Evaluation for this course is based on a **100%** open book examination.

The exam will consist of short answer questions, and/or essay questions, and/or problem questions, and/or multiple-choice questions.

Short answer questions and multiple-choice questions test candidates' ability to succinctly evaluate statements about material covered in the syllabus.

Essay questions test whether candidates have critically engaged with the material listed in the syllabus and have started to form their own opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments, principles, and doctrines discussed in those materials.

Problem questions test candidates' ability to identify legal issues, accurately state the applicable legal rules, apply those rules to novel situations, and draw conclusions supported by analysis. In other words, problem questions require the exercise of independent judgment grounded in the application of general rules to specific fact situations.



CORE MATERIALS

1. Bryden, Kennedy *et al*, *Public Law: Cases, Commentary, and Analysis, Fifth Edition* (Toronto: Emond Montgomery, 2025). [Referred to below as “Bryden”.] <https://emond.ca/Store/Books/Public-Law-Cases-Commentary-and-Analysis-5th-Ed?r=%2fStore%3fsearchtext%3dPublic%2blaw%26searchmode%3danyword>
2. Prescribed cases that are not included in the Bryden text are available free of charge from CanLII: www.canlii.ca/
3. Prescribed articles that are not included in the Bryden text are available online free of charge (website address is specified).

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

For those interested in reading further on these topics, you may wish to consult the following list of sources, available at most Canadian law libraries:

Gerald Heckman. “International Human Rights Norms and the Substantive Review of Administrative Decision-Making” (Chapter 14 of Flood and Daly, eds., *Administrative Law in Context*, 4th Edition, Emond Montgomery 2021)

Eisenberg, M., *The Nature of the Common Law*, (Cambridge, Mass: HUP, 1991)

Fairlie, John, *Introduction to Law in Canada, 3rd ed.* (Toronto: Emond, 2023)

Forcese, Craig & Aaron Freeman. *The Laws of Government: The Legal Foundations of Canadian Democracy, 2nd Edition* (Toronto: Irwin Law, 2011).

Forsey, Eugene A. *How Canadians Govern Themselves, 10th ed.* (Ottawa: Library of Parliament, 2020):

https://lop.parl.ca/staticfiles/Learn/assets/PDF/ParliamentaryPrimer/how_cdn_govern_the_mselves_10th_ed-e.pdf

Sasha Baglay, *Introduction to the Canadian Legal System*, (Toronto: Pearson, 2015)

Hogg, Peter W. & Wade K. Wright. *Constitutional Law of Canada, 2022 Student Edition* (Toronto: Carswell, 2022).

Justice Canada, “Canada’s System of Justice”: www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csi-sjc/

Schauer, F., *Thinking Like a Lawyer: A New Introduction to Legal Reasoning*, (Cambridge, Mass: HUP, 2012)

Waddams, S.M., *Introduction to the Study of Law, 8th Edition*, (Toronto: Carswell, 2016)



COMPONENTS

1. Basic Theories of Law; Racism & the Law

Positivism and Natural Law

Feminist Perspectives on Law

Critical Legal Studies

Law and Economics

Required Readings:

- Bryden, Chapter 2
- *R. v. Morris*, 2021 ONCA 680
- *8573123 Canada Inc. v. Keele Sheppard Plaza Inc.* 2021 ONCA 371
- *R. v. Gladue* [1999] 1 S.C.R.
- Michael Trebilcock, "Law and Economics" (1993) 16:2 Dal LJ 360
<https://digitalcommons.schulichlaw.dal.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1680&context=dli>
- Asha Kaushal, "Multiculturalism and the Irreducibility of Race" (October 01, 2024).
The University of British Columbia Peter A Allard School of Law Research Paper
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4997417

2. Indigenous Peoples and the Law

Aboriginal Rights and Title

Indigenous Self-Government Aspirations

The Modern Treaty-Making Process

A. Required Readings: Introductory Materials

- Bryden, Chapter 3
- Section 91(24) of *The Constitution Act, 1867* (U.K.), 30 & 31 Victoria, c. 3
- Section 35 of *The Constitution Act, 1982*, being Schedule B to the *Canada Act 1982* (U.K.), 1982, c. 11
- "Introduction" in Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, pp. 1-21:
http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2015/trc/IR4-7-2015-eng.pdf
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:
<https://undocs.org/A/RES/61/295>
- An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
<https://parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-2/bill/C-15/royal-assent>



B. Required Readings - Indigenous Institutions and Self-Government:

- Douglas Sanderson, “Redressing the Right Wrong: The Argument from Corrective Justice” (2011) 62 University of Toronto Law Journal 93
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1945380
- Indigenous Law Research Unit, Secwepémc Lands & Resources Law, Summary
<https://ilru.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ILRU-SNTC-Lands-Summary.compressed.pdf>
- *R. v. Pamajewon*, [1996] 2 SCR 821
<https://canlii.ca/t/1fr8z>
- *Reference re An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families*, 2024 SCC 5, <https://canlii.ca/t/k2qhn>
- Kent McNeil, “The Inherent Indigenous Right of Self-Government”, *ABlawg* (4 May 2022) <https://ablawg.ca/2022/05/04/the-inherent-indigenous-right-of-self-government/>

C. Required Readings – Re: Aboriginal Rights:

- *Chippewas of the Thames First Nation v. Enbridge Pipelines*, [2017] 1 SCR 1099,
<https://canlii.ca/t/h51gx>
- *Clyde River (Hamlet) v. Petroleum Geo-Services Inc.*, 2017 SCC 40,
<https://canlii.ca/t/h51gv>
- *Mikisew Cree First Nation v. Canada (Governor General in Council)*, 2018 SCC 40,
<https://canlii.ca/t/hvhcj>
- *Pastion v. Dene Tha’ First Nation*, 2018 FC 648, <https://canlii.ca/t/hsqfp>
- Robert Hamilton & Howard Kislowicz, “The Standard of Review and The Duty to Consult and Accommodate Indigenous Peoples: What is the Impact of *Vavilov*?” (2021) *Alberta Law Review*
<https://albertalawreview.com/index.php/ALR/article/view/2663/2616>

D. Required Readings – Re: Aboriginal Title:

- Ghislain Otis, “Aboriginal Title Claims to Private Lands in Quebec” (2025) 57:2 UBC L Rev 513, 2024 CanLIIDocs 3156, <https://canlii.ca/t/7nl7t>
- *Newfoundland and Labrador (Attorney General) v. Uashaunnuat (Innu of Uashat and of Mani Utenam)*, 2020 SCC 4, <https://canlii.ca/t/j5cbg>
- *Tsilhqot’in Nation v. British Columbia*, 2014 SCC 44, <https://canlii.ca/t/g7mt9>



E. Required Readings – Re: Aboriginal Treaties:

- *Ontario (Attorney General) v. Restoule*, 2024 SCC 27, <https://canlii.ca/t/k60vs>
- Christina Gray and Hayden King, eds., “Treaty Interpretation in the Age of *Restoule*” (Yellowhead Institute, May 2022)
<https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Restoule-Special-Report-YI-May-2022.pdf>

3. Sources of Canadian Law

The Common Law and Civil Law Traditions

- i. Reception of European Law
- ii. Bijuralism
- iii. Common Law Method: Precedent and Equity

Statutory Law

International Law

Required Readings:

- Bryden, Chapter 4

Civil Law and Common Law

- *Grimard v. Canada* [2009] FCA 47, <https://canlii.ca/t/22x23>
- *Reference re Supreme Court Act, ss. 5 and 6*, 2014 SCC 21, [2014] 1 S.C.R. 433, paras. 1-12 and 72-107, <https://canlii.ca/t/q67w2>

Common Law Method, Stare Decisis, Equity

- Irit Samet-Porat, “Equity” in H Dagan and B Zipurskey, eds., *Research Handbook in Private Law Theories* (2020)
https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/128732978/Equity_Final.pdf
- Bray, Samuel L., “The Concept of the Common Law” (February 15, 2025). U. Chi. L. Rev. Online (forthcoming 2025), Available at SSRN:
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5139829

Common Law Method: Appellate Review

- *Housen v Nikolaisen*, 2002 SCC 33, <https://canlii.ca/t/511t>



International Law and the Domestic Legal Order

- Barnett, "Canada's Approach to the Treaty-Making Process", 2021, Library of Parliament <https://lop.parl.ca/staticfiles/PublicWebsite/Home/ResearchPublications/HillStudies/2008-45-e.pdf>
- *Baker v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration)*, [1999] 2 S.C.R. 817 (read headnote for factual context, read paras. 69-71, 78-81), <https://canlii.ca/t/1fqk>
- *R. v. Hape* 2007 SCC 26, [2007] 2 SCR 292, (read paras. 1-56), <https://canlii.ca/t/1rq5n>
- *Nevsun Resources Ltd. v. Araya*, 2020 SCC 5, (read paras. 1-26; and 60-133), <https://canlii.ca/t/j5k5j>
- Alex Neve (2023), *Closing the Implementation Gap: Federalism and Respect for International Human Rights in Canada*. IRPP Study 90. Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy. <https://centre.irpp.org/research-studies/closing-the-implementation-gap/>

4. Fundamental Principles of the Canadian Legal System

The Constitution of Canada

Principles Underpinning

Public Law

- Rule of Law
- Constitutional Supremacy
- Parliamentary Sovereignty
- Federalism
- Separation of Powers
- Judicial Independence (Overview)

Constitutional Amendment

Required Readings:

- Bryden, Chapter 5

Rule of Law

- *Singh v. Canada (Attorney General)*, 2000 CanLII 17100 (F.C.A.), paras. 13-44, <https://canlii.ca/t/4ldb>
- Jeremy Webber, "A Democracy-Friendly Theory of the Rule of Law", (2024) 16 *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 339 <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s40803-024-00240-5.pdf>
- Lorne Sossin, "The Unfinished Project of *Roncarelli v. Duplessis*: Justiciability, Discretion and the Limits of the Rule of Law." *McGill Law Journal* 55.3 (2010): 661-688 https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/cqi/viewcontent.cqi?article=2125&context=scholarly_works



Constitutional Supremacy

- *R. v. Sullivan*, 2022 SCC 19, <https://canlii.ca/t/jp64b>
- *Canada v. Power* 2024 SCC 26, <https://canlii.ca/t/k5vlj>

Separation of Powers

- *Reference re Code of Civil Procedure (Que.)*, art. 35, 2021 SCC 27, <https://canlii.ca/t/jgnxz>
- *Ontario (Attorney General) v. Ontario (Information and Privacy Commissioner)*, 2024 SCC 4, <https://canlii.ca/t/k2l80>

5. Parliament and its Components

The Monarch and Governor General

Senate

- Joel I. Colón-Ríos and Allan C. Hutchinson, “Constitutionalizing the Senate: A Modest Democratic Proposal” (2015) 60:4 McGill LJ 500
<https://lawjournal.mcgill.ca/article/constitutionalizing-the-senate-a-modest-democratic-proposal/>

House of Commons

Required Readings:

- Bryden, Chapter 6

6. Functions of Parliament

Summoning

Prorogation

- Léonid Sirota, “The Case of the Prorogations and the Political Constitution”, (2021) 3 Journal of Commonwealth Law 103
<https://www.journalofcommonwealthlaw.org/article/24429-the-case-of-the-prorogations-and-the-political-constitution>

Dissolution

Key Actors

Parliamentary Procedure and Law-Making

- Lorne Neudorf, “The Judicialization of Parliamentary Privilege: A Cautionary Tale”, (2024) 13 Laws 26, 2024 CanLIIDocs 1905 <https://canlii.ca/t/7nc6h>



Required Readings:

- Bryden, Chapter 7
- *Duffy v. Senate of Canada*, 2020 ONCA 536, <https://canlii.ca/t/j9fd2>
- *Chagnon v. Syndicat de la fonction publique et parapublique du Québec*, 2018 SCC 39, <https://canlii.ca/t/hvf8d>
- *Singh c. Attorney General of Quebec*, 2018 QCCA 257, <https://canlii.ca/t/hqh4l>

7. The Executive and its Functions

The Functions of the Executive

Sources of Executive Power

Executive Institutions and the Political Executive

Required Readings:

- Bryden, Chapter 8
- *Walter v. British Columbia*, 2019 BCCA 221
<https://canlii.ca/t/j109v>
- *Tesla Motors Canada v. Ontario (Ministry of Transportation)*, 2018 ONSC 5062
<https://canlii.ca/t/htp0p>
- *Mathur v. Ontario*, 2024 ONCA 762, <https://canlii.ca/t/k7c3v>
- Patrick F. Baud, “The Crown’s Prerogatives and the Constitution of Canada” (2021) 3 *Journal of Commonwealth Law* 219
<https://www.journalofcommonwealthlaw.org/article/31330-the-crown-s-prerogatives-and-the-constitution-of-canada>
- *Ontario (Attorney General) v. Clark*, 2021 SCC 1, <https://canlii.ca/t/jfnmp>



8. The Courts and the Judiciary

Structure of the Canadian Court System

Judicial Appointments

Judicial Independence

Required Readings:

- Bryden, Chapter 9
- Caroline Dick, “The Ascent of the Canadian Judicial Council: Bill C-9 and the Move Towards Judicialized Governance” (2024) 57 Canadian Journal of Political Science 195 https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/OD4357A9A6150E706CC261B86BA47733/S0008423923000793a.pdf/ascent_of_the_canadian_judicial_council_bill_c9_and_the_move_towards_judicialized_governance.pdf

9. Statutory Interpretation

Approaches to Interpretation

The Modern Approach to Interpretation

Required Readings:

- Bryden, Chapter 10
- *La Presse inc. v. Quebec*, 2023 SCC 22 (CanLII), <https://canlii.ca/t/k0hhn>
- Mark Mancini, “Two Uses of Purpose in Statutory Interpretation” https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4899343
- Ruth Sullivan, Les certitudes du droit – “The Plain Meaning Rule and Other Ways to Cheat at Statutory Interpretation”, 2021 26-5 *Lex Electronica* 153, 2021 CanLIIDocs 13058 <https://canlii.ca/t/ts25>
- *Telus Communications Inc. v. Federation of Canadian Municipalities*, 2025 SCC 15 (CanLII), <https://canlii.ca/t/kbr48>



10. Constraints on Legislative and Administrative Action

Judicial Review in a Democratic Society

Judicial Review of Administrative Action

Required Readings:

- Bryden, Chapter 11
- *Brown v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration)* 2020 FCA 130 (read paras. 1-23; and 136-149), <https://canlii.ca/t/j93cf>
- *Shuttleworth v. Ontario (Safety, Licensing Appeals and Standards Tribunals)*, 2019 ONCA 518, <https://canlii.ca/t/j140m>
- Paul Daly, “Standard of Review of Regulations: Auer v. Auer, 2024 SCC 36” in *Administrative Law Matters* (November 8, 2024) <https://www.administrativelawmatters.com/blog/2024/11/08/6563/>
- Mark Mancini, “The Promise of Habeas Corpus Post-*Vavilov*: The Principle of Legality” (2022) Vol. 100, No. 2 *Canadian Bar Review*, pp. 223-253 <https://cbr.cba.org/index.php/cbr/article/view/4768>
- Paul Daly, “Mapping Artificial Intelligence Use in the Government of Canada” (2023) 20:1 *Governance Review*, pp. 74-95 <https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/gouvernance/2023-v20-n1-gouvernance08729/1106045ar/>



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Online Resources

The majority of case law and legislative resources needed by NCA students are available on CanLII, the free legal information resource funded by the Federation of Law Societies of Canada (www.canlii.org). That includes all decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada, and all federal, provincial, territorial and appellate courts.

Your exam registration fee also includes free access to the Advance Quicklaw resources of LexisNexis. Your ID and password will be arranged and emailed to your email address on file a few weeks after the end of the registration session.

Sign in to Advance Quicklaw via <http://www.lexisnexis.com/ca/legal>. The first time you sign in you will be asked to change or personalize your password. Remember your User ID and password are personal, and should not be shared with anyone.

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