university of groningen / faculty of law

LLM Health and Technology Law

Preliminary course descriptions for 2024-2025 academic year

Please note the courses and content listed below are still subject to change.

COURSES

International Human Rights Law (6 ECTS)
This course examines the basic concepts and theories concerning human rights; the protection of human rights in positive international law, in particular through the work and case law of international human rights bodies such as the Human Rights Committee and the various regional human rights adjudicatory bodies. Lectures will focus on topics such as:
• The conceptual and philosophical background to human rights;
• The development of the universal human rights system including discussions of the different types of human rights monitoring bodies under the United Nations and their procedures to ensure compliance with the human rights obligations of states;
• An overview of the various regional human rights monitoring bodies and recent developments therein;
• The various procedures available to states, individuals, and groups to secure the protection of human rights law at the international and regional level;
• A discussion on the content and scope of a select group of rights under international and regional human rights law and recent developments (f.e. the right to life; the right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom of association and assembly; and some select social and cultural rights);
• A discussion of various current topics in the field of human rights law including the potential human rights obligations of non-state actors such as international financial institutions and multinational corporations, the human rights of vulnerable groups such as indigenous populations, the problem of dealing with terrorism and human rights, and the discussion about the existence of a right to (sustainable) development and a clean and healthy environment.
• Perspectives on a career in the field of human rights and the need to actively engage in the field.

Introduction: Health Law in Context (6 ECTS)

Health law cuts across various branches of law, including international, regional and domestic law and policy. In this program, the interface between health law and technology law is central. The sources of law that form the two areas of law at focus in this track stem from human rights, international trade law, ethical standards and biomedical principle, among others. Thus, the legal toolkit for this track is interwoven across multiple legal disciplines. In addition, health law and technology law interact with health science, health economics and behavioral sciences. Altogether, health and technology law comprise a complex and overlapping network of legal and non-legal standards. This course will introduce students to the skills needed to navigate this wide range of standards.

In this course, students will be introduced to the various disciplines underpinning both health law and technology law. Each week covers one of these sub-fields and addresses its origins, scope, and the main laws and principles. Topics include regime interaction between the various fields in this master track, the meaning and scope of health law, bioethics and patient rights, and an introduction to technology law. Together, these weekly seminars will offer students a solid foundation for the overall master's programme.

Data Driven Innovation (6 ECTS)

Data is at the core of all digital technology innovations, including not only AI and IoT, but also Cloud services and Blockchain technology. The amount of data is growing globally — from 45 zettabytes in 2019 to a projected 175 zettabytes by 2025. The reasons behind this worldwide growth in data are varied, but include our increased access and use of the internet, smartphones and social media. However, what matters most when dealing with data is not their volume but rather, knowing how to use it. While data analysts focus on gathering and interpreting data in order to address specific problems, the task of lawyers is to ensure that all of these activities are done in compliance with the legal regime. In this course, students will learn about the legal and ethical framework within which data driven innovation takes place. The focus will broaden from Data Protection and Privacy issues to the undeniable role that Tort law plays with regards to innovation. The students will be active recipients of knowledge. They will discuss the legal implications of the use of different types of data, such as: personal data, big data, open data and synthetic data. The students will gain the necessary understanding and expertise through focusing on specific fields of interest – AI; the Health sector; and Predictive Policing and Risk Assessment – allowing them to contrast the legal challenges which arise with the benefits deriving from the use of data. At the end of the course, the students will bring all of the knowledge together in a student driven workshop.

International Health Law (6 ECTS)

This module focuses on international standards relevant for the protection of health. These include the standards adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO), human rights standards, domestic health law, as well as related fields of international law, for example international trade law. Attention will be paid to 'international health law' as an emerging field of international law. Human rights law, in particular the right to health, plays an important role in this field. Broad themes that will be covered are:

a) Introduction to the international standards protecting health; introduction to international (global) health law

b) the role of human rights in healthcare, health promotion and prevention

c) regime interaction; the role of various fields of international law as they inform public health protection

Specific themes (subject to change):

1) Infectious disease control with a case study of COVID-19

2) Regulation of risk factors for noncommunicable chronic diseases including cancer and diabetes, i.e. tobacco, nutrition, harmful use of alcohol and physical inactivity

3) Indoor and outdoor air pollution

4) Mental health

5) Reproductive health, including the regulation of modern reproductive technologies, and abortion

6) Euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide

7) Children's rights in healthcare

8) Regulation of drugs

In relation to these themes, the course also focuses on international and domestic lawmaking.

Law of Sustainable Technology (6 ECTS)

'I am becoming Death, the destroyer of worlds'. These were the words that came to Oppenheimer's mind when he witnessed the world's first nuclear weapon detonate. Technology and innovation are essential to the flourishing of our species, but it may well be its downfall. Technology and technological progress therefore require regulation to be sustainable. This course is all about how to regulate sustainable technology. We will first address what sustainability means, beyond the well-known definition provided by Brundtland. That understanding will then be connected to the various regulatory interventions that are connected to sustainability. We will focus on digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence, but borrow from genetically modified organisms, chemicals, dual-use technology and consumer technology. We will study this technology for its societal impact, both intended and unintended. This impact will subsequently be examined for its connection to the regulation that is in place (or absent). On the basis of these findings, the current regulation in place for digital technologies will be analysed and critically reviewed, potentially leading to new (forms of) regulation being designed. The course takes its shape in the form of a series of lectures and seminars. The lectures will be used to convey knowledge and to involve the student in the critical reflection on that knowledge. Accompanying the lectures, there will be seminars. Students will apply that knowledge during the seminar and, using team-based learning, develop their reflection and design skills when they first identify a number of digital technologies, identify the regulatory framework relevant to those technologies and then reflect on that regulatory framework to identify possible points for improvement. These findings will be done in small groups and then presented to and be discussed with the other groups.

Lab: Regulating Digital Health (6 ECTS)
This lab will combine international and European law to focus on the regulation of digital health. This course will cover various aspects of (digital) market regulation, the regulation of medical devices, the emerging frameworks for artificial intelligence and the responsibility of different actors in the use of digital health applications. Legal questions tied to data privacy and the processing of personal data will be addressed.

Law in Practice (6 ECTS)
Law in Practice is a collective name for course units in which one can experience how law or legal science works in practice. Credits can only be awarded for components that are included in the overview of Law in Practice components. It is recommended that you first do a seminar and then a Law in Practice component. For some Law in Practice components, you must be admitted via an application or comparable motivation. For example, if you opt for an internship (both within and outside the Faculty), you must arrange this yourself. An internship must meet the requirements of the Faculty's Internship Regulations and must be approved in advance by the Internship Coordinator of your programme/track. For other components, such as most legal consultancy options, you can register via Progress, but please note that there are a limited number of places within these components. The chosen component needs to be approved as part of your programme. Enrolment is compulsory. Therefore, prepare yourself well and read timely and carefully in Ocasys how and when the enrolment for the Law in Practice course unit you would like to participate in will take place. Also check whether there are any entry requirements. If it later turns out that you do not fulfill the prerequisites, this may mean that you will still be de-enrolled for the relevant component, which may result in you not being able to participate in a Law in Practice course unit in that semester.

Seminar - Health and Technology Law in the 21st century (6 ECTS)
This course will challenge students to address current health and technology legal questions in practical settings. Students will use international, regional and national law in multidisciplinary scenarios. They will learn about complexity and systems theory, power dynamics, interdependence and uncertainty in health and technology law. Students will be tasked with addressing current health and technology problems faced by the University Medical Centre Groningen (UMCG) and local, domestic and foreign governments. Students will identify the role of law in addressing these challenges. They will be challenged to effectively engage with other fields outside of law and identify pathways for cooperation. We will also collaborate with the Aletta Jacobs School of Public Health, the University Medical Center Groningen and other departments within the university to design cross-disciplinary projects. Throughout the course students will visit experts to obtain firsthand experience from those currently working in the fields of health and technology.

Master's thesis (12 ECTS)
The master programmes are all concluded by the writing of a Master's thesis. Topics should be sent to the Programme Coordinator for approval, after which a supervisor will be appointed. Every LLM student will receive 'Thesis Guide' at the beginning of the academic year. There is also a thesis class at the beginning of every semester. Before starting to write on the thesis, all students should have read the guidelines and are obliged to have participated in at least one of the two thesis classes