

**Philosophy 155**

**Philosophy of Law**

**Fall 2013**

**Professor Bill Shaw**

**An acquaintance with legal philosophy is an important part of what it means to be an informed citizen and an educated person. This is because the law permeates every sphere of society. It surrounds us from birth – guiding, restricting, and sometimes punishing us. But what exactly is law? When is it valid? What connection, if any, is there between our legal duties and the requirements of morality? How does the law differ from other social institutions? How should an understanding of law shape our conception of society and of ourselves as citizens? These and related questions have intrigued and troubled thinkers throughout the ages.**

**This course is an attempt to wrestle with some challenging philosophical questions raised by the law. Some of these questions are age-old problems; others are contemporary issues or issues specific to our legal system. We will be examining different theories of the nature of law and of legal reasoning, as well as exploring various philosophical issues that arise in the more specific contexts of contemporary criminal and civil law – for example, lawyers’ ethics in an advocacy system, the extent of criminal liability, the rights of criminal defendants, the nature of tort law and the concept of negligence, among other issues.**

**The course will meet** Mondays & Wednesdays 1:30-2:45 p.m**. The required text is Arthur and Shaw, *Readings in the Philosophy of Law*, 5th ed. (Prentice-Hall 2010)**