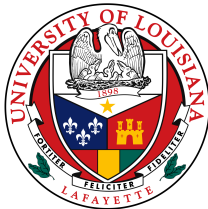


# Introduction to POLS 382/383



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# Welcome to POLS 382/383!

- In this course, we'll take a broad look at the American legal system.
- Along the way, we'll examine law, legal outcomes, and other issues related to jurisprudence.
- We'll also build skills related to legal reasoning and analysis.



# How to succeed in this course

- Be engaged! Attend class, take notes, read all materials, participate, and make use of office hours.
- Make use of the lecture slides, and take note of any and all “chalk-talk.”
- Complete every assignment, and take advantage of extra-credit opportunities when they arise.

# Introduction

- What is law?
- What is jurisprudence?



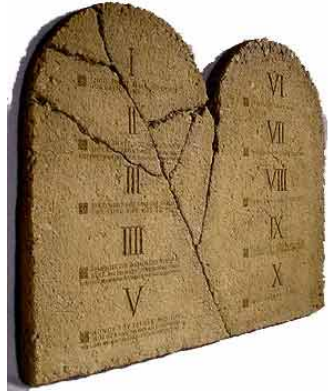
# Where does law come from?

- Natural law
- Positive law



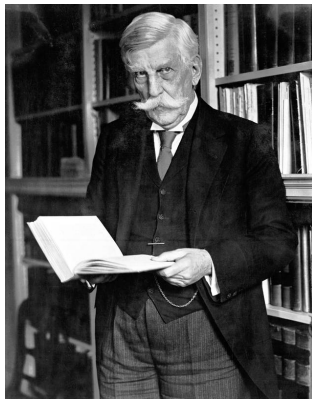
# Law and morality

- Even supposing we believe in a natural law system, is all law related to morality?
- Are there other things that are morally right/wrong that are legal/illegal?



# Legal modes of thought

- Legal formalism
- Legal realism



Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (1841-1935)

# The social contract

- If the legal realists are right and the “the law” is just vibes, why obey it?
- The concept of the social contract can help to address this problem.





# Origins of U.S. positive law

- Based in traditions of written law (e.g., Hammurabi's Code)
- Anglo-Saxon tradition leading to the common law
- U.S. tradition of limited government based in civil society



# Conclusion

- “The law” can be a vague concept, and it’s unclear to what authority we should look in establishing it.
- Jurisprudence relates to the study of law. Nevertheless, here too, we run into a problem as there’s no agreed-upon method to apply the law.
- Consequently, the remainder of this course will deal with topics like how we go about thinking and applying the law in the context of the United States.