I. DEPARTMENT OBJECTIVES

The Legal Studies Master’s Degree Program at the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) presents the graduate student with a course of study in public law, emphasizing law as a social phenomenon as well as a technical body of rules. It is a rigorous course of study, designed to develop the candidate's critical understanding of the legal system. Law is examined from an interdisciplinary liberal arts perspective emphasizing analytical and conceptual thinking, legal research and writing, substantive areas of law, ethical and public interest concerns, public advocacy, and the role of law in society.

Knowledge of the law and legal systems is important for people in many fields: social workers, librarians, insurance executives, public administrators, union representatives, legislative liaisons, lobbyists, law enforcement officials, court administrators, historians, political scientists, program managers, agency directors, legal analysts, association executives, personnel administrators, government administrators, operations researchers, and Ph.D. candidates, to name a few. Skills which are necessary for advancement in law-related careers are incorporated into the Legal Studies Master’s Degree Program, including comprehensive legal research and writing skills. The Legal Studies Master’s Degree Program provides both the professional and scholarly skills necessary for success in law-related careers or further graduate-level study.

II. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

A. Admission Process

Students must apply for admission to both UIS and the Legal Studies Master’s Degree Program. Each has its own application process. Information about the application process for UIS can be found at http://www.uis.edu/admissions/applyToday/. For the UIS Application Process students will need to complete the “Graduate Admission Application” and submit official copies of their transcripts from all previous schools they attended. Students must also submit a Personal Statement to the Legal Studies Department. The form which students use to submit their Personal Statement can be found at: http://www.uis.edu/legalstudies/curriculum/ApplicationRequirements/. The application deadline for priority fall admission is March 1st. The application deadline for priority spring admission is October 1st.

B. Full Admission

In order to be considered for admission into the Legal Studies Master’s Degree Program students must meet all of the following requirements:

1. Earned a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited university or college. No particular undergraduate major is required, as Legal Studies Master’s Degree students come from a variety of educational experiences and backgrounds.
2. Achieved an undergraduate cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. (Exemptions from the minimum grade point average are made in exceptional circumstances.)

3. International students applying to the Legal Studies Master’s Degree Program must have TOEFL scores of at least 570 (PBT), 230 (CBT), or 88 (IBT). TOEFL scores must be sent directly by the testing agency (see policy in the UIS Catalog). The institutional code number for the UIS is 1787.

4. If required, complete the preliminary course LES 401: Legal Research and Citation. No credit will be given toward the graduate degree for LES 401. (LES 401 is offered online during the fall term.) A grade of "B" or better must have been earned in this course to be considered sufficient to meet the preliminary requirements. Students with extensive professional legal research experience may be able to receive a waiver for LES 401 by successfully completing a LES 401 Waiver Research Problem, and should discuss this with their faculty advisor. If a student wishes to receive a waiver for LES 401 based on their prior completion of an equivalent course, a petition must be filed with the Legal Studies Department. Requests for waiver based on prior coursework should be submitted on the student petition form available from the UIS Records and Registration Forms website. Students can find the petition form at: [http://www.uis.edu/registration/forms](http://www.uis.edu/registration/forms). Determination of whether a prior course or prior experience is equivalent to LES 401 is made on a case-by-case basis.

C. Conditional Admission

The Legal Studies Department reserves the right to accept students conditionally. Full admission to the program can be conditioned on achieving a grade of “B” or better in certain courses designated at the time of the conditional admission. After the student has completed the applicable courses, the Legal Studies Graduate Admissions Committee will review the student’s file. File reviews are conducted on an ongoing basis throughout the academic year. When complete, the admission decision will be promptly communicated to the student and to the UIS Admissions Office.

III. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, INTERNSHIPS AND GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

For information about the cost of tuition or financial assistance, students should contact the UIS Office of Financial Assistance at (217) 206-6724.

Students may find information about UIS Scholarships at: [http://www.uis.edu/financialaid/scholarships/index.html](http://www.uis.edu/financialaid/scholarships/index.html).

UIS offers several excellent internship programs for graduate students, including: The Illinois Legislative Staff Intern Program, the Graduate Public Service Intern Program, Graduate Assistantships, and the Whitney M. Young Graduate Fellowship Program.
Material on financial aid, internships, and graduate assistantships must be submitted early in the calendar year, please contact the UIS Office of Financial Assistance and each internship program for additional information.

**IV. LEGAL STUDIES ONLINE INTRODUCTORY BLACKBOARD COURSE**

The Legal Studies Department has established a Legal Studies Online Introductory Blackboard Course (titled “Legal Studies Online”). It is designed to welcome our students, give a brief tutorial of the American legal system, guide students through common tasks, and serve as a clearinghouse for frequently accessed information. Prior to beginning their first course as a Legal Studies Master’s Degree student, students must carefully review the information in the Legal Studies Online Blackboard Course and successfully complete the Legal Studies Tutorial Quiz (successful completion is defined as 80% or higher). In order to complete the Legal Studies Online Introductory Blackboard Course, students must read *Whose Monet? An Introduction to the American Legal System* by J. Humbach (2007). The Legal Studies Online Blackboard Course is only open to admitted Legal Studies Master’s Degree students, and is available at no cost. No credit is awarded for completion of the Legal Studies Online Introductory Blackboard Course.

**V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

The courses in the Legal Studies Master’s Degree curriculum fall into three categories: preliminary, core, and electives. All preliminary courses and core courses are offered in an online format. Electives vary in subject matter and mode of delivery. Not all electives are offered online or every academic year.

**A. PRELIMINARY: LES 401: Legal Research and Citation (4 credit hours)**

Students who do not have significant experience in legal research (as determined by the Legal Studies Department) must complete LES 401. Students generally complete LES 401 their first fall semester. No credit will be given toward the graduate degree for LES 401.
B. **Program core courses (20 credit hours)** – *All core courses are only offered online. Both on-campus and online students must take their core courses online.*

- LES 501 Introduction to Graduate Legal Studies (4 credit hours) *Must be taken during the student’s first fall semester.*
- LES 512 Theories of Justice (4 credit hours)
- LES 519 Seminar in Courts and Policymaking or LES 513 Seminar in Politics and Law (4 credit hours)
- LES 587 Public Advocacy (2nd semester) (4 credit hours) *Offered in the spring semester. To enroll in LES 587, the student must have successfully completed LES 401 (if required) and LES 501.*
- Closure Requirements: LES 504 Graduate Seminar or LES 590 Thesis (4 credit hours) *Must be taken during the student’s last spring semester. To enroll in LES 504, the student must have successfully completed LES 587.*

C. **Electives: (16 credit hours)**

The focus for the degree is achieved through four elective courses (with a minimum of two courses being LES-prefixed electives). Students may focus on a particular area of law or legal policy, and they may create their own focus from the resources of the Department, College, or University. Suggested areas of focus include: Law and Public Policy, Human Rights and Social Justice, Criminal Justice, or Regulatory Compliance.

1. Legal Studies electives (8 credit hours). These courses must be LES-prefix ed courses, or approved in lieu thereof, at the 400 level or higher.
2. General electives are courses at the 400 level or higher, chosen by the student with the approval of the advisor (8 credit hours). These courses may be in the Legal Studies program or within another department.

- Students enrolled in the UIS Graduate Public Service Internship Program (GPSI) may count the GPSI Seminar course towards their non-LES electives. Similarly, students enrolled in the Illinois Legislative Staff Internship Program (ILSIP) may count the ILSIP: Academic Seminar towards their non-LES electives.
- Students may also fulfill their general electives through clinical education. Clinical education offers a self-directed learning and work experience in a legal setting, enabling students to develop skills necessary for success in a legal environment. Placement options include courts, administrative agencies, state and federal attorneys’ offices, legal aid offices, private law firms, and other public interest groups. Some are paid and some are not. Employment in a law related area, public service and legislative internships may be used for clinical education if the placement meets the requirements. It is possible to earn up to 4 credit hours of clinical education credits, which will be applied toward the student’s Legal Studies electives. Each credit hour is the equivalent of 50
working hours; a 4 credit hour course requires 200 hours in the placement. The course is graded on a Credit/No Credit basis only. Clinical placements should be discussed with the appropriate faculty at least one semester before the student is planning to take the course. A Clinical Education Course Form (available in the department office) must be approved by both the department chair and the student's faculty advisor before registration in the course will be allowed.

VI. CLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

UIS requires each graduate student to complete a closure exercise to enable the department to assess the student's level of learning and readiness to be a master’s level candidate. Legal Studies has determined this requirement may be fulfilled either by passing LES 504: Graduate Seminar, the capstone course of the program, or by completing a thesis

A. Option A: Graduate Seminar (LES 504)

As described by UIS, "a capstone course is an integrative course utilizing theoretical and applied aspects of the relevant discipline and shall include a major writing component such as a case study, project, or examination." In Legal Studies, the capstone course is LES 504, which provides students an opportunity to build upon and further develop research, writing, and analytical thinking skills and to apply these skills to the resolution of current substantive legal problems or issues in such a way that the relationship of law to society and to social change is examined. The course is normally offered every spring semester.

The topic and design of the seminar varies, but always includes a major writing component. In addition, at the end of the course the department sponsors a presentation of student seminar projects developed in the course. These may include individual research presentations, panels presenting a variety of positions on the thesis topic, or another format depending on the seminar design. Presentations are announced and are open to LES faculty and students and other interested individuals.

B. Option B: Thesis (LES 590)

To prepare a thesis, a student must choose a thesis advisor consistent with the student’s interest and the proposed topic. The thesis advisor is a faculty member, not necessarily from the LES faculty, who is willing to supervise the student’s work on the proposal project. The thesis advisor may be (but often is not) the same person as the academic advisor.

The following thesis proposal format is required from all LES graduate students intending to take the Thesis option for the closing exercise. Students should submit the proposal to their thesis committee chair, who will then distribute it to the thesis committee.

The thesis proposal must be approved by all members of the committee. The proposal should
include:

- Title page, including the student’s name, thesis title and names of the committee members.
- Statement of research problem in question.
- Research objectives.
- Theoretical foundation/Preliminary Literature Review.
- Research approach, design, and methodology.
- Expected results/findings and potential significance.
- Initial list of references.

Approval of the proposal by the committee is required prior to the student being given permission to register for LES 590. It is expected that the proposal will be written, defended, and approved by the committee prior to the semester the student enrolls in LES 590.

A completed thesis is presented, orally and in writing, to a thesis committee for review and approval. A thesis committee consists of at least three persons, including the thesis advisor and two or more additional faculty members. At least one of the faculty members must be from Legal Studies. Another member from outside the department is appointed by the Dean after consultation with the thesis advisor. When all elements of the thesis exercise have been satisfactorily completed, each member of the committee signs the Closure Approval Form, which is attached to the written thesis and submitted to the Dean.

Students selecting the thesis option may enroll in up to four credit hours in the master’s thesis course (LES 590). They may accrue that total in increments. Campus policy requires that students be enrolled in at least one semester hour of master’s closure credit for each regular semester (fall/spring) after they have begun their master’s closure exercise until that exercise is completed. For LES students choosing the thesis option, this requirement means that if the thesis is not completed during the first four hours of enrollment in LES 590 Thesis, students must register for LES 590 for one credit hour in each subsequent regular semester (fall/spring) until the thesis is completed. If the thesis is still not completed by the time eight hours of continuous enrollment in LES 590 have been accumulated, students must register for LES 598 (zero credit hours, one billable hour) each regular semester (fall/spring) until the thesis is completed. Likewise, if students choosing to take the graduate seminar fail to complete the required course work/project during the initial four hours, they must enroll in LES 597 (zero credit hours, one billable hour) each regular semester (fall/spring) until the course work/project is complete. (Department policy allows students until the end of the first week of classes in the subsequent semester to complete closure requirements before they are required to re-enroll in the closure course.)
VII. Grading Policy

Students must maintain a B (3.0) or higher average within the program and must earn a B (3.0) or better in all LES core courses (grades of B- or lower are not accepted). Students are only allowed to repeat core courses once. In non-core LES courses, students may have a maximum of four hours in which they earn less than a B but at least a C (grades of C- or lower are not accepted). In non-LES elective courses, students may have an additional four hours where a grade of less than a B but at least a C is earned (grades of C- or lower are not accepted), as long as an overall B (3.0) average is maintained. Clinical education courses, tutorials, and thesis courses are graded on a credit/no credit (CR/NC) basis.

Note: Students must also meet the guidelines defined by the UIS campus policy, which state: “master’s degree students may apply a maximum of eight hours of C grades (grades of C- or lower are not allowed) toward a degree, provided that each hour of C is balanced by an hour of A and an approved Student Petition is on file in the Office of Records and Registration.”

VIII. Transfer Credit

UIS may accept up to 12 semester hours of graduate-level work completed at other accredited institutions. However, only hours earned with a grade of B or better and accepted by the program will also be accepted by UIS (grades of B- or lower will not be accepted). Requests to transfer credit for courses bearing a grade such as P (pass) or CR (credit) must be supported by certification from the institution or instructor that the work was of at least B quality.

Time Limit on Transfer Credit: All transfer credit to be applied to a master’s degree must have been earned no more than five years prior to the first graduate course taken at UIS in pursuit of that degree. Exceptions may be granted by programs on a case-by-case basis.

Requests for acceptance of transfer credits should be submitted on the student petition form available from the UIS Records and Registration Forms website. Students can find the petition form at: http://www.uis.edu/registration/forms. All transfer credits must be applicable to the Legal Studies Master’s Degree curriculum requirements. All transfer courses must be approved by the Legal Studies Department, and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

IX. Waivers

Students must fulfill all program course requirements unless they receive a waiver of a requirement. Waivers are often requested when:

- It is impossible for a student to take a required class.
- A student has already taken one of the required classes as an undergraduate (or an equivalent) and wants to take an alternative class instead.
Waivers apply only to the requirement, not to the number of required credit hours. The required credit hours to obtain the degree are not changed by obtaining a waiver. Waivers of Legal Studies requirements are unrelated to university admissions actions concerning transfer credits for courses taken elsewhere.

To request a waiver, a completed University Student Petition Form (available from the UIS Records and Registration Forms website: http://www.uis.edu/registration/forms) stating the requested waiver action, reasons it should be granted, and how it will affect the student's academic plan, and signed by the student's faculty advisor, must be submitted to the Legal Studies Waiver Committee. The Committee will notify the advisor when action has been taken. If approved, the signed petition is sent to the registrar for notation when checking final graduation comments.

If the request relates to a course requirement or prerequisite already met, the petition should include statements of:

- The work experience and course(s) already taken, including a detailed description of the course content and the text(s) used (attach syllabus if course was taken at another institution);
- A statement of how that course or work experience meets the requirement for which the waiver is being requested;
- A copy of the transcript showing that the course was completed and the grade earned in it; and
- The course being proposed in lieu of the required course.

If the request relates to a required course the student was unable to take, the petition should include a statement of:

- How many times the course requested to be waived was offered and why it was not taken at one of those times; and
- What other courses will be taken if the waiver is granted.

The Legal Studies Waiver Committee has the sole authority to grant waiver requests. Decisions are made by majority vote of the committee. Decisions may be appealed to the entire Legal Studies Department Committee.

X. INCOMPLETE POLICY

Incompletes will be given only in extreme circumstances. Failure to complete assignments is not an extreme circumstance. Legal Studies Department policy requires that incompletes be given only if at least 50% of the course work has been completed and the student has a passing grade (at graduate minimums) at the time of the request. All approvals for an incomplete are at the discretion of the instructor. A student granted an incomplete will be given a provisional grade and must have a written plan for completion approved by the instructor and department chair.
The Legal Studies Department policy requires the provisional grade to be an “F,” which means that if the course work is not completed by the end of the following semester, the course grade will become an “F.”

XI. AWARDS AND HONORS

The Legal Studies Department bestows the following awards each year on graduating Legal Studies Master’s Degree students: Honors Cords, Highest Honors, and Graduate Legal Studies Department Marshall. Honors Cords and Highest Honors are awarded to the two students with the highest cumulative graduate GPAs graduating in that academic year. The honor of the Graduate Legal Studies Department Marshall is bestowed each year upon the graduating Legal Studies Master’s Degree student with the highest cumulative graduate GPA walking in that year’s commencement ceremony.

XII. TIME LIMITATIONS & CONTINUING ENROLLMENT

All graduate credit earned at UIS to be applied toward the completion of a master’s degree must be taken within six consecutive years of the first graduate course taken at UIS in pursuit of that degree. This does not include transfer credit earned before the first term of graduate enrollment, credit granted for prior learning, and prerequisites; however, it does include closure requirements. Exceptions may be granted by degree programs on a case-by-case basis, and programs may also grant leaves of absence.

XIII. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Students in the Legal Studies Master’s Degree Program agree to abide by the UIS Academic Integrity Policy by establishing authentic and ethical behavior in their academic work. Plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation, academic interference, unauthorized access, and facilitation are all considered academic violations. Violations of the Academic Integrity Policy may result in sanctions including failing the assignment, failing the course, transcript notation, and/or referral for Academic Hearing. The UIS Academic Integrity Policy can be found at http://www.uis.edu/academicintegrity/policy/policy.html.

XIV. FACULTY ADVISORS

Each student is assigned a faculty advisor upon being admitted to the Legal Studies Program. The faculty advisor is available to assist the student in planning the overall course of graduate study. The advisor also may provide advice, explain course options, and help if any academic difficulties or concerns arise while at UIS. A student should consult their faculty advisor prior to registering for courses each semester. Additionally, faculty advisors are required to sign a variety of forms, including applications for clinical or thesis studies. Most advisors require, at a minimum, that the student meet with them before they will approve a project.
Students may change advisors by filing a university form used for this purpose available from the department secretary. It is the student's responsibility to make sure the new advisor has all pertinent academic records including the academic plan developed with the prior advisor.

**XV. COMMUNICATION POLICY**

When classes are in session, students may ordinarily expect to receive a response to an email communication to a professor within two business days. Response time may be longer during academic breaks including Thanksgiving, winter, and spring breaks and during the summer. Students are responsible for contacting professors for all appointments, including advising appointments. Each professor schedules his or her own appointments and should be contacted directly with any appointment requests.

**XVI. REQUIREMENTS FOR ONLINE LEARNING**

**A. Minimum Requirements**

Please see the minimum system requirements at: [http://online.uis.edu/browsertest/](http://online.uis.edu/browsertest/)

**B. Blackboard**

Blackboard is the learning management system at UIS that allows students to access class materials and interact with their professors and fellow students. Students may find additional information about Blackboard at: [http://www.uis.edu/colrs/students/FirstTimeOnline.html](http://www.uis.edu/colrs/students/FirstTimeOnline.html). Students may view a brief video demonstrating different aspects of Blackboard at: [https://uiscamtasiar.uis.edu/relaycontent/Blackboard_9_Overview_-_Students_-_Web_(1024x768)_-_20100614_11.42.38AM.html](https://uiscamtasiar.uis.edu/relaycontent/Blackboard_9_Overview_-_Students_-_Web_(1024x768)_-_20100614_11.42.38AM.html).

**C. Additional Resources**

Additional information on online learning requirements may be found at: [http://www.uis.edu/colrs/students/index.html](http://www.uis.edu/colrs/students/index.html).

**XVII. GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

**A. Catalog Requirements**

Degree requirements are determined by the UIS Catalog that is in effect when a student takes his or her first graduate level course. The student should keep a copy of that initial catalog for reference purposes. All students have the option of following the degree requirements set forth in the catalog in effect at the time of graduation. This option must be submitted prior to submitting the graduation contract.
B. Program Requirements

In order to be a candidate for a Master of Arts Degree in Legal Studies, students must complete all of the following requirements:

- Full admission to the Legal Studies Master’s Degree Program.
- Full admission to UIS.
- Completion of a minimum of 36 hours of course work, including all program course requirements set forth in the catalog.
- Satisfaction of all university graduation requirements specified in the catalog.
- Maintenance of a "B" grade point average or higher. A "B" grade point average means a minimum score of 3.0 on a 4.0 grade point system for all of the courses taken together. A maximum of 4 credit hours of "C," “C+,” or “B-” are allowed in Legal Studies elective course(s). An additional four credit hours of a "C," “C+,” or “B-” grade are allowed in non-Legal Studies Courses as long as a cumulative "B" GPA is maintained. All clinical education courses and tutorials are graded on a Credit/No Credit basis. Other courses may be taken on a Credit/No Credit basis at the student's option. Graduate students must earn a minimum of "B" to receive credit in a class for which they have chosen the Credit/No Credit option. Prerequisite and preparatory courses taken at UIS to meet admissions requirements are not factored into the graduate student's overall GPA.

C. Graduation Application Requirements

Prior to graduation, all students must submit an online graduation application and submit an approved Graduation Application Signature Form. Students must complete this process by the posted deadline. A mandatory graduation application fee will be charged to each student upon submission of the graduation application. Forms and instructions for the graduation application can be found on the Records and Registration Forms website. Students with questions concerning any of the information above or regarding graduation eligibility should contact Graduation at (217) 206-7730 or registrar@uis.edu.

XVIII. Suggested Readings

Below is a list of readings suggested for students before enrolling in their first Legal Studies course. The following books address issues frequently discussed in our courses or are otherwise relevant to the program.