



**This learning unit is not open to incoming exchange students!**

Teacher(s)	Bernard Nicolas ;Hachez Isabelle ;
Language :	French
Place of the course	Bruxelles Saint-Louis
Prerequisites	<i>The prerequisite(s) for this Teaching Unit (Unité d'enseignement – UE) for the programmes/courses that offer this Teaching Unit are specified at the end of this sheet.</i>
Main themes	<p>The legal theory seminar offers students the opportunity to develop their own personal research approach, building on the theoretical frameworks established in the <i>Introduction critique à la pensée juridique contemporaine</i> (ICPJC) course or the Legal Theory course. The topics covered vary depending on the year and the seminar teachers.</p> <p>Students are encouraged to conduct genuine research in legal sciences, drawing on sources from both legal theory and the humanities and social sciences, in a resolutely interdisciplinary approach. This research culminates in the writing of a personal paper, which is then defended orally. This teaching method aims to consolidate students' knowledge of the scientific approach and critical thinking in law. It is in this sense that the seminar is often considered the 'treasure' of the Faculty of Law.</p> <p>Language learning is particularly encouraged. The seminars are offered in Dutch and English for students of the multilingual programmes, while in the monolingual programme some texts may be provided in English. Moreover, all students are encouraged, in the context of their research, to consult sources in French, Dutch, and English.</p> <p>By combining an interdisciplinary and critical approach with an openness to languages, the legal theory seminar is fully in line with the Faculty of Law's educational project as defined in its Manifesto (R.I.E.J., 2016/1, Vol. 74, pp. 169-175).</p>
Learning outcomes	<p><b>At the end of this learning unit, the student is able to :</b></p> <p>The legal theory seminar is fully in line with the programme's learning outcomes (listed below in quotation marks):</p> <p><b>'I. Acquiring general knowledge':</b> the seminar contributes to the development of legal knowledge, but also to a 'solid knowledge of non-legal humanities and social sciences, enabling students to interpret legal phenomena from a resolutely interdisciplinary perspective'.</p> <p><b>'II. Acquiring specific legal knowledge':</b> the seminar builds on a solid prior knowledge of positive law in several branches of law, which is necessary to enable students to develop critical thinking about legal concepts, rules and principles. As such, it contributes to strengthening an in-depth and critical understanding of law, beyond its technical application alone.</p> <p><b>'III. Acquiring the methods and tools of the scientific approach':</b> while students are regularly required, in the context of other work, to carry out research using 'traditional' sources of law (legislation, doctrine, case law), the seminar is, within the Bachelor of Law programme, the ideal place to be introduced to scientific research. It enables them to learn how to use sources from legal theory and the humanities and social sciences, to carry out a review of the state of research, and to formulate a question. It enables them to learn how to draw on sources from legal theory and the humanities and social sciences, to conduct research, to formulate questions and hypotheses, and to construct a rigorous argument to answer them, based on these various sources and 'in accordance with scientific ethics'.</p> <p><b>'IV. Acquiring analytical, reflective and argumentative skills based on concrete situations':</b> the seminar enables students to 'develop their critical thinking' and their 'ability to construct a reasoned argument' and introduces them to 'the development of independent, coherent and relevant thinking', 'but also creative and original thinking'.</p> <p><b>'V. Mastering written and oral communication in English':</b> the assessment, which is based on both written work and an oral defence of their research, develops students' 'ability to communicate, in writing and orally, a legal idea and/or argument, and to defend it convincingly'. For students enrolled in bilingual programmes, the seminar also enables them to 'understand, study and reproduce theoretical content in two languages other than French (English and Dutch)'.</p> <p><b>'Transferable skills':</b> the seminar promotes 'mastery of the English language, both oral and written' for students enrolled in the bilingual programme. It also aims, for all students, to 'develop their sense of autonomy in carrying out a variety of tasks': reading and preparing texts, personal research, writing, oral presentations, and meeting deadlines. In addition, the seminar provides an opportunity to 'refine personal ethics' through individual research in line with one's own values, as well as through participation in group discussions that encourage the exchange of ideas in an atmosphere of 'respect for others'.</p>

<p>Evaluation methods</p>	<p>In this course, assessment is continuous throughout the year. There is therefore no exam in the first session; the assessment methods for the second session are different and are specified below.</p> <p>Assessment is based on three elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- preparation and participation in classes (4 points out of 20);</li> <li>- written work presenting the results of personal research (8 points out of 20);</li> <li>- oral defence of this work (8 points out of 20).</li> </ul> <p><i>Preparation and participation in sessions</i></p> <p>Preparation and participation in sessions are assessed according to the following criteria: if a student attends without having clearly prepared the texts (no reading notes or inability to participate in discussions due to obvious lack of reading), this will be considered an unjustified absence from the session. Any unprepared participation is therefore considered an absence. In the event of more than one unjustified absence from seminar sessions, the student will be given a failing grade for absence (0A) in the first session, automatically resulting in a move to the second session.</p> <p><i>Written assignment</i></p> <p>The written assignment must be between 4,500 and 5,000 words in length: this count does not include footnotes, the cover page, the bibliography or the table of contents. The assignment must be submitted at the end of the course suspension period, i.e. on <b>Sunday 3 May 2026 at 11:59 p.m.</b> The date and time of submission on <i>Moodle</i> shall be deemed authentic. If the lecturer also requests a printed version of the written assignment, the printed version must be submitted to the Faculty Administration. If the student submits their work after the buildings have closed, the printed version of their work must be submitted to the Faculty Administration without delay, i.e. on <b>Monday 4 May 2026.</b></p> <p>In the event of a justified delay, the deadline for submitting the written work may be extended by a number of days equivalent to the interval between the start date of the justification and the originally scheduled submission date, up to a maximum of 10 days. In this case, the teacher may also change the student's assignment to an oral defence group to ensure that the defence can be based on the written work.</p> <p>In the event of an unjustified delay, a penalty of 2 points will be applied to the total for each 24-hour period commenced. A delay of more than 5 days, the submission of a non-genuine assignment or failure to submit an assignment will result in an absence mark (0A) being awarded for the overall mark.</p> <p>The assessment of written work is mainly based on the structure of the argument, the formulation of the problem and its relevance, interdisciplinarity, critical thinking, the quality of research, general understanding of the issue and literature, and methodology.</p> <p>Students must submit, along with their written work, the duly signed document entitled 'Integrity Pledge' (<i>engagement d'intégrité</i>). Failure to submit this document will result in a two-point penalty.</p> <p>The written work will be analysed using the 'Compilatio' software to detect plagiarism and content generated by artificial intelligence.</p> <p>Students are expected to use the referencing system taught within the Faculty for their work; a summary table will be provided at the beginning of the seminar for this purpose. For a specific reason (e.g. related to the subject of the work or the language in which it is written), the teacher may authorise the use of another referencing system (such as APA, Oxford, etc.).</p> <p><i>Oral defence of research work</i></p> <p>Finally, students will present their personal research during an oral defence.</p> <p>The oral defence sessions will take place in small groups, in the form of half-days organised after the suspension of classes but before the end of the second term — for the 2025-2026 academic year, <b>between Monday 4 May and Friday 15 May 2026.</b></p> <p>Defences may take various forms, but last 20 minutes per student, followed by a 10-minute discussion with the supervisor and other members of the group.</p> <p>Students are assessed both on the quality of their own presentation and on the relevance of the questions they ask other participants in the group.</p> <p>Submission of the written work is a prerequisite for admission to the oral defence.</p> <p>Any unjustified absence from the half-day defence, even if it is the only absence of the year, will result in an absence mark (0A).</p> <p><b>In the second session</b>, students must submit a written assignment by <b>Saturday 16 August 2026 at 11:59 pm</b> at the latest, following the same guidelines as those applicable in the first session and present an oral defence of their research to the teacher and, where applicable, in the presence of other students also enrolled in the second session.</p> <p>If the student has participated in the seminar sessions, the mark awarded for preparation and participation (marked out of 5) is retained. However, in the event of more than one unjustified absence, the student will be required, during their oral defence, to answer a question asked by the teacher on one of the texts in the portfolio, selected at random. This means that they must have worked on all the texts in advance.</p>
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<p>Teaching methods</p>	<p>The teaching method is based on continuous assessment, making student attendance compulsory during sessions and oral presentations.</p> <p>Seminar sessions are held in person, and students take handwritten notes, as the use of computers is not permitted. The texts to be read are made available to students according to the methods chosen by the lecturers, via the Moodle website and/or in a collection of texts available from the SVIB course materials department.</p> <p>Students must write a handwritten reading note summarising the texts provided, identifying the key issues or ideas that particularly interest them. These notes are an essential working tool for discussions during the sessions and must be brought to each class.</p> <p>Preparation and active participation in the sessions are compulsory and will be assessed. In the event of absence, whether justified or not, students are still required to submit their preparation notes to the teacher responsible.</p> <p>The timetable for each seminar is set by the faculty administration, based on the availability of students and teachers.</p> <p>However, all seminars follow the same structure, consisting of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- an introduction in October;</li> <li>- two sessions in the first term, then four sessions at the beginning of the second term, each focusing on one or more texts chosen and distributed by the teacher;</li> <li>- at least one opportunity for students to discuss their individual research with their professor at a time during the second term set by the professor before the course suspension period (for the 2025-2026 academic year, this period runs from Monday 20 April to Saturday 2 May 2026);</li> <li>- the submission of a written assignment on the last day of the period of suspension of classes.</li> <li>- several oral defence sessions of personal research work, organised in small groups of students to allow for collective discussions about the research carried out; these sessions take place after the period of suspension of classes but before the end of the second term.</li> </ul> <p>Teachers use one or more artificial intelligence tools (in particular 'ChatGPT') in their teaching in order to familiarise students with the benefits and limitations of this type of tool. While the use of artificial intelligence tools is encouraged in the seminar, students are expected to use them responsibly in accordance with the document 'Responsible Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence,' approved by the Faculty Council. Students are required to sign an 'integrity pledge' to this effect and to submit it together with their written work.</p>
<p>Content</p>	<p>The legal theory seminar is based on reading and collective discussion of texts dealing with either general issues of legal theory or more specific topics, always approached from a conceptual, critical and interdisciplinary perspective. The topics vary depending on the year and the teachers in charge of the seminar. These variations allow, on the one hand, to accompany students in exploring the evolution of research, and on the other hand, to share with them the work currently being carried out by the teachers.</p> <p>Students are also supported in carrying out their own research, based on the issues discussed collectively, but developed around a theme specific to each individual. This research work results in the writing of a personal paper, followed by an oral defence.</p>
<p>Inline resources</p>	<p>On the course Moodle platform, students will find the texts to read, as well as, where applicable and depending on the teachers, the slides used during the sessions and, for information and illustration purposes, links to videos, podcasts or other resources related to the seminar.</p> <p>On the course Moodle, students will also have access to links to educational videos produced by the teachers. These videos cover the seminar on legal theory, the use of word processing (Word), tips for researching sources in the social sciences and humanities, and the use of artificial intelligence.</p>
<p>Bibliography</p>	<p>Une bibliographie de base est fournie, sans être exhaustive, avec le portefeuille de textes. Des suggestions de lecture peuvent être faites par le ou la titulaire à l'occasion des discussions individuelles avec les étudiant-es.</p> <p>A basic bibliography is provided, without being exhaustive, together with the portfolio of texts, and bibliographic suggestions may be made during individual discussions between students and their lecturers.</p>
<p>Other infos</p>	<p>No pre-correction of texts is offered by the teachers. However, students can meet with their teacher during office hours or individual appointments, and it is recommended that these discussions be based on a text (outline, chapter, etc.).</p> <p>In order for the results obtained throughout the year to be officially recorded and communicated to students, the course will be formally included in the June session programme, although no exams will be held at this stage of the year.</p>
<p>Faculty or entity in charge</p>	<p>DRTB</p>

<b>Programmes containing this learning unit (UE)</b>				
Program title	Acronym	Credits	Prerequisite	Learning outcomes
Bachelor in Law	<a href="#">DROB1BA</a>	4	<a href="#">BDROI1212</a> AND <a href="#">BFILO1116</a>	
Bachelor of Laws (French-Dutch-English / Droit-Rechten-Laws)	<a href="#">DREB1BA</a>	4		