



YONG PUNG HOW SCHOOL OF LAW

Year 2023/24 Term 2

COURSE CODE: LAW 4022

COURSE TITLE: DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE (1.0 CU)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Seminars: In this course, students will be introduced via seminars to topics on “equal access to justice” and how digital technology can assist to bridge the gap for those who lack access to the resources that could help meet their legal needs.

Project Work: Students will work in groups with legal aid organisations / public agencies in Singapore to design and develop a solution that will improve access to justice or the effectiveness of legal representation. At the end of the term, groups will represent SMU to showcase their solutions at the Iron Tech Lawyer Invitational (<https://www.georgetowntech.org/irontechlawyer>). (SMU tied for 1st runners-up in 2021 and 2022.)

Examples:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Mterh01YhDyWFdZX9l5u7JJNx9o6T6rb/view?usp=sharing>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zSuxvx-EReRxJRZybauNVpLEdqmMEqPT/view?usp=sharing>

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1d7yEnlfW4wyDeyYPX73ObjX-F6z2maIv/view?usp=share_link

Technical Skills: Depending on the project, students will be taught skills in one or more of: (a) document assembly; (b) chatbots; (c) machine learning and natural language processing; (d) data visualisation; (e) cloud computing services; (f) search and information retrieval.

Prior Knowledge: There are no pre-requisite modules but students should preferably (a) have taken COR-LAW2215 Digital Intelligence for Lawyers or (b) have some prior programming experience, or (c) experience using ChatGPT, or (d) have completed some course related to design thinking or human-computer interaction, or (e) be prepared to acquire some of this knowledge before the start and/or during the first few weeks of the term (learning resources will be provided).

Learning Outcomes: At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Understand the importance of equal access to justice and some of the common issues faced by both individuals with legal or justiciable problems and the organisations that assist them.
- Evaluate and compare practices and solutions from other jurisdictions or service industries to generate new ideas for improving access to legal services or justice in Singapore.
- Solve specific real-world access to justice problems through iterative design, prototyping and testing of digital applications in a collaborative team setting.

PRE-REQUISITE COURSES

None.

RECOMMENDED TEXT AND READINGS

There are no compulsory textbooks for this course; readings from a variety of texts and other online sources will be used.

The following texts will be referenced:

Richard Susskind, *Online Courts and the Future of Justice* (2019) Oxford University Press, Cambridge. (Available online via SMU Library.)

OECD/Open Society Foundations (2019), *Legal Needs Surveys and Access to Justice*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/g2g9a36c-en>

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Keynote Lecture delivered at the Negotiation and Conflict Management Group (NCMG) ADR Conference 2019: *Technology and the Changing Face of Justice* (14 November 2019)

<https://www.supremecourt.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/ncmg---keynote-lecture.pdf>

The Law Society (England & Wales), *Technology, Access to Justice and the Rule of Law: Is technology the key to unlocking access to justice innovation?*

<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/research-trends/technology-access-to-justice-rule-of-law-report/>

Roger Smith, *Digital Delivery of Legal Services* (updated February 2019)

<https://www.thelegaleducationfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Digital-Technology-Winter-2018.pdf>

Networked Society Institute, University of Melbourne (2018) *Current State of Automated Legal Advice Tools*

<https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2018-05/apo-nid143431.pdf>

ASSESSMENT METHOD

Assessment Categories	Weightage (%)
Class Participation	10
Individual Essay	30
Group Project	50
Group Project Presentation	10
Total	100

There will be **no final examination** for this course.

No questions from past year papers or published test banks will be used verbatim for the graded continuous assessments in this course. There will be no final exam paper for this course.

COURSE METHODS

The course will be delivered through a combination of technical instruction, seminar-style discussions and hands-on exercises.

Note: Students will select their own groups for the Group Project/Presentation component or elect to be assigned based on their indicated interests in the projects available for selection. Further instructions will be provided at the beginning of the course.

CLASS SCHEDULE

	Topics	Readings (TBC)
1	Seminar: Unpacking the idea of “access to justice” and clarifying what are “legal” needs; Survey of legal institutions, existing legal services in Singapore, and pro bono services. A guest speaker working in the area of improving access to justice will share his/her experience.	

2	Seminar: Survey of legal technologies and innovations in Singapore and globally; the Legal Profession Act: regulating advocate and solicitors, professional standards/liability and the implications for automated services. A guest speaker working in the area of improving access to justice will share his/her experience.	
3	Seminar: Limits of technology and costs/risks introduced by technology (cybersecurity, privacy, transparency); Evaluating solutions, including measuring for impact and sustainability. A guest speaker working in the area of improving access to justice will share his/her experience.	
4	Workshop: Tech Topic 1 (determined based on projects)	
5	Workshop: Tech Topic 2 (determined based on projects)	
6	Workshop: Tech Topic 3 (determined based on projects)	
7	Workshop: Tech Topic 4 (determined based on projects)	
8	Mid-term Break	
9	Project Check-In and Testing for Feedback	
10	Project Check-In and Testing for Feedback	
11	Project Check-In and Testing for Feedback	
12	Project Check-In and Testing for Feedback	
13	Competition: Project Presentations	

Note: The above syllabus/schedule is meant only as a guide and is subject to amendment.

DROPPING A COURSE

Students are reminded to follow the dates and procedures of add/drop modules found in <https://oasis.smu.edu.sg/Pages/RO/All-About-BOSS.aspx#parentHorizontalTab5>

UG and JD students need to drop the electives via BOSS unless otherwise instructed by the School for specific electives (e.g. Moots).

Students who fail to follow the correct procedures and stipulated timelines for dropping their modules will obtain a “W” or “F” grades as indicated on OASIS.

Do note that a “W” and ‘F’ grade is reflected **permanently** on a student’s transcript.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity

All acts of academic dishonesty (including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, facilitation of acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized possession of exam questions, or tampering with the academic work of other students) are serious offences.

All work (whether oral or written) submitted for purposes of assessment must be the student's own work. Penalties for violation of the policy range from zero marks for the component assessment to expulsion, depending on the nature of the offense.

When in doubt, students should consult the instructors of the course. Details on the SMU Code of Academic Integrity may be accessed at <https://oasis.smu.edu.sg/Pages/DOS-WKLSWC/UCSC.aspx>.

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Accessibility

SMU strives to make learning experiences accessible for all. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers due to disability, please let me know immediately. You are also welcome to contact the university's disability services team if you have questions or concerns about academic provisions: DSS@smu.edu.sg. Please be aware that the accessible tables in our seminar room should remain available for students who require them.

Digital Readiness for Teaching and Learning (DRTL)

As part of emergency preparedness, instructors may conduct lessons online via the Zoom platform during the term, to prepare students for online learning. During an actual emergency, students will be notified to access the Zoom platform for their online lessons. The class schedule will mirror the current face-to-face class timetable unless otherwise stated.