

Access to Justice and Technology

Winter 2026

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Office hours Tuesday and Thursday 2-3 pm or by appointment

Technology can level playing fields, democratize the law, and improve access to justice to the under-represented poor, low earning opportunities communities, working, and middle class people in the US. However, automation, greater data aggregation, the rise of AI, and predictive algorithms entrench social and economic inequality by design and run the risk of creating an even bigger and faster justice gap. How do we benefit from technology advanced in this space and not cause further harm? How do we ensure that the technology created actually provides real redress to those who need it and does not cause harm? Coupled with the lack of a right to legal representation for civil legal matters, these questions are pertinent today.

This class examines the relationship and societal implications of the application of legal technologies being designed and used to address the US Justice Gap. We will explore the intersections of race, class, gender, and power dynamics. We will frame the class against core and emerging ethics, principles, and best practices.

Students will be introduced to the history of legal services in the US, multiple frameworks including, human centered and participatory design, privacy, surveillance, civil rights, to give a broad introduction how legal technology has arrived to this point and this space, and where it could lead.

The course will also be an experiential course. Where students will apply what they have learned in their coursework. The final project for this class will be for students to design and/or review a new technology solution in the access to justice space using the ethics, standards, and best practices discussed in class. Students will select from selected ideas/problem areas or they can propose their own project/idea.

ASSIGNMENTS/PAPERS/PROJECTS:

Critical Reflection Piece: Students will be required to write a 1000-1200 word critical piece on one of the course's weekly topics or a legal problem of interest. You are required to sign up for the topic you wish to write about in the second week of the course. You will then present your topic to the class on a rolling basis, before submitting the write up by the 5th week of class.

Final Project: The major deliverable in the course is a conceptual design project. This consists of two components which encourage creative thinking and applied orientation:

- A conceptual design document for a creative design or prototype for a legal informatics or justice administration application (e.g., software system, mobile phone application); and,
- A 30 minute group presentation at week 9 on the final project. The project component is intended to stimulate creativity, and thus the design/prototype may take many different forms. More information on the final assignment will be provided in class.

The final project will be done in groups. Forming groups is encouraged, and all students in the group will be required to contribute to one aspect of the project if not all.

We will allocate class time to work on this during class time. I will assign intermittent assignments to help in completing the design, rules, and development of the project as we go.

Students will be encouraged to work with a non profit or community group to focus on an issue of interest to them.

I have 2 pre-assigned problems—which more than 1 group can do, however students can identify their own project/need and discuss with the professor for approval.

Learning Objectives

- Develop a broad understanding of civil legal needs in the US, based on reports and multiple State and Federal reports on civil legal aid
- Develop a working definition of Access to Justice, and how that occurs using the definition of the United Nations 2012
- Understand how technology has been used to date in civil legal aid spaces and courts
- Learn how to think critically about technology and through the critical reflection on a recent innovation and identify the benefits and harmed potential and corporations use/test, and approach safety when using or promoting new products.
- Understand law, its regulation, the role of the Bar, and the Role of the ABA in setting standards for the practice of civil legal aid
- Understand techno optimism and how those values permeate tech implementation in general and in legal spaces
- Understand how bias is replicated through tech, databases, and learn approaches to diminish those biases and ensure equitable technology and approaches

- Develop basic understanding of design, participatory design and put those skills to practice through the final group project
- Learn how to develop a basic innovation solution for a discrete project for our community, how to research it, create it, test it and then pitch it. Learn how to develop a “pitch” and write a “pitch” similar to a “letter of interest” and develop a basic budget for a project.

Attendance:

This class is a seminar and participation is key to success and passing the class. In person attendance to class is required. Please don't be late. Only 2 excused absences granted. Missing more than 2 classes will lead to no credit for the course. Please notify the instructor of absence before it happens if possible or as soon as possible and sign up for office hours to discuss the materials missed. I am not planning to do zoom, nor record because the class is interactive in nature. If this is an issue please reach out to me.

You will be expected to be an active participant in my class. Students will be expected to come ready to engage in active discussion around the reading and group assignments. They will be expected to comment and move the discussion forward, read, and share counter points, and students will also be called in class.

Reading before class is crucial to succeed and benefit from this class.

The course will use primarily the socratic method when we are discussing reading assignments -so you are expected to come with all materials read and ready to discuss in class. As needed I might lecture at the beginning of the class to bring in insights from legal services delivery and application of technology in that realm. However, students need to read the articles assigned each week and be ready to discuss them during class time.

This means I won't always lecture, and you will be expected to read the materials and be ready to discuss. The pace of discussion will depend on the level of preparedness of the students.

Disability Accommodations:

Reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities need to be discussed as early as possible when the course starts, and within the first two weeks. They can be arranged through the Disabilities Resources for Students in the Wilson Library 360 650 3083. More information can be found here: www.edu/depts/drs

Academic Integrity:

The use of AI or chaptgpt is not allowed in this class. All work is expected to be done using traditional research and writing methods. Use of AI includes use of google AI search summaries. Grammarly is a predictive tool and not AI in this class.

If I suspect AI use in your written submissions I will email you and ask you to meet with me in person to review how you did the research and writing of your work. I will ask you for drafts, process, and to walk me through how you created your final submission. You are expected to collaborate with me in this process.

Fairhaven College has a new AI policy. It explains why as a college Fairhaven does not support use of AI in student learning, except with the approval of the professor. In this class, there is no such permission.

Please review the plagiarism rules of the University. Please review:

Plagiarism Policies and Guidelines: <http://libguides.wvu.edu/plagiarism>

Student Guide to avoiding Plagiarism: <http://www.wvu.edu/soc/docs/plagiarism.pdf>

Grading:

We do not use an A-F scale. Students evaluate their own work performance. They do a self evaluation. Combined with the instructor's assessment for participation, assignments, and mastering of class skills will record the quality of student performance. More information can be found here:

<https://fairhaven.wvu.edu/how-write-self-evaluation>.

1. Attendance is required. For full attendance credit if you leave before class ends your attendance does not count unless excused beforehand via email.
2. Class participation is required
3. Timely, punctual submission is required for this class. Late work will not count and will not be graded if no written accommodation was discussed before the due date and is noted in writing by the professor in the Canvas comment box.
4. The final project, presentation (pitch) and materials are required and also must be submitted on time. The interim deliverables (questions, requirements) are also required and not optional.

Case Briefs:

While we might not do case briefs for this class, if we do length is about 1-2 pages per case brief. Hard copies are due the day assigned in Canva, generally at the end of the

week of when the case/materials are discussed. I put sample legal memo formats in the pages for the class. Feel free to come to office hours if you are not familiar with the IRAC rubric, or if you have never done legal writing before.

Submission of assignments must be done on the Course Canvas page–by attaching shared google doc Email submissions will not be accepted. Punctual submission of written work is expected.

Comments/feedback on assignments

I will give you feedback for assignments in Canva, under each assignment. I expect students to check comments frequently and to respond to my questions through the comment box in a timely manner. The comments will be the way we communicate on written work in this class on one, or during office hours. Hallway conversations not reduced to email or to Canvas comments do not count for submission modifications. I sometimes ask you to resubmit an assignment, please pay attention to those requests and redo them within the week, so I can review and close the assignment. Work submitted past the deadline will not be commented on, and will not count. Timely submission of written assignments is key to pass this class.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

You needn't purchase any textbooks for this course. The main text can be accessed here. [Dædalus Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences "Access to Justice"](#) Volume 148, Number 1; Winter 2019 (Free)

OPTIONAL TEXTS:

I have these books and will bring them to class in case we need them.

"Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor" by Virginia Eubanks Purchase ([Here](#))

"Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy" by Cathy O'Neil Purchase ([Here](#))

GUESTS SPEAKERS

We will have guest speakers joining class virtually. We'll try to let you know, in advance, who they will be so you can prepare to engage with them.

CLASS SCHEDULE (Schedule changes will be noted via Canvas Announcements).

Week	Topics	Readings/Videos (to be completed before class)
1 (1/6)	<p>An Introduction to Law, Technology & Access to Justice</p> <p>Access to What?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Closing the Justice Gap” Claudia Johnson https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpgEceNtYIA <p>Take a look at “Our relationship with Tech” page i Canvas. We will work through some of these questions in a group break out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Access to What” Daedalus (49-54)
(1/13)	<p>Defining Access to Justice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Introduction” John G. Levi & David M. Rubenstein Daedalus (7-9) • “Access to What” Daedalus (49-54) • “The Invisible Justice Problem” Lincoln Caplan Daedalus (19-29) • “Lawyers, the Legal Profession & Access to Justice in the United States: A Brief History” Robert W. Gordon Daedalus (177-189) • “The Role of the Legal Services Corporation in Improving Access to Justice, James J. Sandman Daedalus (113-119)
Week 2 (1/20)	<p>Applied Technologies in Legal Services Delivery & Courts</p> <p>Group Think Circle of Human Concern</p> <p>Bill Gates example/class break out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Court innovations and access to justice in times of crisis” Tania Sourdin, <p>Access to Justice Technology Principles--WA State Courts June 2020</p>
(1/23)	<p>Structural Justice Barriers: Racism, the Digital Divide & Inequities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Access to Power”- Sameer Ashar & Annie Lai Daedalus (82-87) <p>Empowering Justice Through Justice Workers, Burnett</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Techno-Optimism & Access to the Legal System” - Tanina Rostain Daedalus (93-97) • “Justice & the Capability to Function in Society” Pascoe Pleasence & Nigel J. Balmer Daedalus (140- 149) • How the Coronavirus is Killing the Middle Class The New Yorker <p><u>Written assignment–write a 1 to 2 page opinion on the Rostain article and answer the prompts. Jan 20, 2026</u></p>
<p>Week 3 (1/27)</p>	<p>Interdisciplinary Problem Solving Constructs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Participatory Design for Innovation in Access to Justice” Margaret Hagan Daedalus (120-127) • Community testing 4 innovations for traffic court justice– Margaret Hagen • WA Tech Principles • Virtual Courts Helping our hurting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/principles-continued-use-remote-court-proceedings • Legal Services Corporation, Podcast, Ethics in the Age of Technology, 2019 • Legal Standards for the Provision of Legal Services by Non Profits, ABA SCLAI ABA SCLAID <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ (focus on the tech standards and rule 4.10) • An Agile Approach to Legal Project Management, (We will do these in class) Part 1-3 • Ethical Design Engagement with your Community • Design Thinking & Agile Development: What are they

		and how do they help Access to Justice?
(1/26)	No Class Uses of Data – Opportunities, Pitfalls, & Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSNTAP Data Analysis Framework <p>Read the Tips and recommendations and the definitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice Futures, Reframing the issue, Burnett Sandefur <p><u>Students convene in groups (4 or less) to start defining a problem space.</u></p> <p><u>Submit a one pager explaining Due 1/29</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <u>Problem identified</u> 2) <u>Connection to UN Definition of ATJ</u> 3) <u>Information needed to design a solution</u> 4) <u>Groups/experts to connect to</u> 5) <u>Research needed to be done</u> 6) <u>Tentative timeline</u>
Week 4 (2/3)	Policy Considerations of Legal Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Simplified Courts Can’t Solve Inequality” Daedalus (128-135) • The Power of a Clean Slate Empty Promises Inside Big Tech weak Efforts to fight hate and lies • “Justice & the Capability to Function in Society” Pascoe Pleasence & Nigel J. Balmer Daedalus (140-149)
(2/5)	Oppressive Algorithms – Algorithmic Decision Making, Big Data & Machine Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically Conscious Computing, Methods for Secondary Education. Amy J. Ko, Anne Beitlers, Brett Wortzman, Matt Davidson, Alannah Oleson, Mara Kirdani-Ryan, Stefania Druga, Jayne Everson (2026). Critically Conscious Computing: Methods for Secondary Education. https://criticallyconsciouscomputing.org/, retrieved 5/28/2026. <p><u>We will break into groups to discuss the multiple aspects this article covers.</u></p> <p><u>How does centralization create harm?</u></p>

		<p><u>Automation</u> <u>Last of access to code/rules?</u> <u>Abstraction?</u></p> <p><u>Come prepared to work on writing up about requirements.</u></p>
Week 5	<p>Techno Optimist Manifesto Participatory Design Ethical Design Design Sprint</p>	<p>The Techno Optimist Manifesto, Marc Andeersen, 2014</p> <p>Please be ready to discuss this manifesto in detail in class. Other articles for the week (assigned before see above)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Participatory Design for Innovation in Access to Justice” Margaret Hagan Daedalus (120-127) • Community testing 4 innovations for traffic court justice – Margaret Hagen • Ethical Design Engagement with your Community <p>•Design sprint--how to work through an issue</p> <p>https://medium.com/n5-now/elements-of-a-value-proposition-a-recap-from-design-sprint-conference-2018-2b2e393baae2</p> <p>Links to an external site.</p> <p>Please use this to ID the core elements of your solution (the fit) between the needs and the value added by your idea/</p>
Week 6 (2/10)	<p>Bias in Legal Algorithms, Interface, and Design</p>	<p>We will start workshopping in class every other session.</p> <p>Other materials to review as you do your design (read before class).</p> <p>Design Justice Network Principles</p> <p>Federal Trade Commission, Do Not Pay, Case Summary, September 2024</p> <p>University of Cambridge, What is Inclusive Design?</p>

		<p>“GSA Translation And Interpretation Guide December 2025” –in files</p> <p>System design--example, expungement: The Power of Clean Slate, JJ Prescott et all, Cato Insitute, 2020</p> <p><u>For your project, in the narrative you will have to describe your terms of service and highlight the protections you would build into the tool from a do not harm perspective. This week you also submit your questions to gather information about the problem space you are working in. (2 written submissions)</u></p>
2/12	Cultural Competency with Justice Technologies	<p>Language Access, Machine Translation</p> <p>Language Access for Legal Aid Wesbistes</p> <p>Language Justice During Covid 19</p>
	After this week we will have 2 hours on Thursday to do group work	
Week 7 (2/17)	No Class	President’s Day
(2/19)	Group consultations	<p>This week we will focus on student projects. Students will share w/the class their core idea, where they are stuck, and what they need feedback and guidance on from the class.</p> <p>Come prepared with materials to share and we will break into 2 group teams to do consultations with each other and then present to the class.</p>
Week 8 2/23	Ethics and Standards	<p>This week we will focus on ethics standards and regulations</p> <p>Come prepared to discuss the “Do not Pay” FTC case and</p>

		<p>these materials</p> <p>On Thursday—we will have workshop time during class hours.</p>
Week 9 and 10	Class pitches	<p>We will do final class pitches this week—30 minutes per group:</p> <p>We might do pitches in multiple sessions and allow for feedback.</p> <p>Use the submission prompts to organize your presentation.</p> <p>Attendance is required on all days.</p> <p><u>The final write up and all materials are due on 3/10.</u></p>
	Announcements	<p>Announcements will go out on Monday covering 2 week periods. Changes to schedule/assignments will be sent via announcements.</p>
	Changes	<p>Changes to reading and assignments might be made at the discretion of the professor.</p>