



FACULTY-LED  
STUDY ABROAD

## KIIS Austria Program, Summer 2025

### PLS 375: Comparative Legal Systems

**Instructor:** Dr. Robin Riner

**Email:** conleyr@marshall.edu

**Instructor's office hours:** on site and by appointment

*Syllabus subject to change*

**1. Course Description:** This course will use the perspectives and tools of anthropology to explore how varied and sometimes conflicting legal systems operate within diverse cultural, political, and social contexts, asking what constitutes "law" in these varied contexts. Focusing in part on the relationship between international and national legal systems, this course will explore the ways in which law and culture intersect within the complex international body of the EU. Students will conduct observations and interviews in national and international legal institutions in and around Austria to examine and think critically about how legal problems unfold and are resolved within multiple, layered legal frameworks.

### 2. Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

#### KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

#### Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

### 3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes:

- Analyze diverse legal processes in different socio-cultural contexts and identify the connections between a particular cultural context and the types of legal structures that exist in that context.
- Recognize connections and conflicts among global and national legal, political, economic, religious, and cultural institutions and practices.
- Critically examine how everyday lives and identities are impacted by political and legal institutions.

**4. Major Topics Covered in the Course:** Defining law; legal pluralism; sovereignty, nationalism, and migration; legal practices and institutions in post-war Europe; ethnography of law; human rights.

#### **6. Required Readings and Materials:**

- Full reading packet will be emailed to students prior to our departure for Austria. Selected readings include:
  - Osella, Stefano. 2022. When comparative law walks the path of anthropology: The third gender in Europe. *German Law Journal*.
  - Graziadei, Michele. 2022. The anthropology of European law. *Oxford Handbook of Law and Anthropology*.
  - Canfield, Matthew. 2023. The anthropology of legal form: Ethnographic contributions to the study of transnational law. *Law & Social Inquiry*.
- Students will need a paper or digital journal that they must bring with them to all excursions for this course.

#### **7. Graded Assignments:**

- Field notes journals (20%): This course will involve a number of excursions and visits to local venues. Students will be required to take notes in a digital or paper journal based on their observations and conversations with people at these venues.
- Reading reflection essays (20%): Students will write a brief reflection based on each reading assigned in the course.
- Field notes analysis (40%): At the end of the course, students will compile and analyze their field notes in combination with concepts learned from class and the readings and write an essay discussing a specific legal anthropology topic related to their observations.
- Participation (20%): Participation grade is based on attendance and active participation in all classes and excursions. See attendance policy below.

Work will be graded on this scale:

90 – 100 A

80 – 89 B

70 – 79 C

60 – 69 D

Below 60 E (F)

This course will be graded on this basis, without regard to other scales (i.e., plus-and-minus) which may apply at your college or university. Note KUIS/WKU does not award +/- grades, only full letter grades.)

#### **8. Attendance Policy:**

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

### **9. Disability Accommodation:**

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, [maria.canning@wku.edu](mailto:maria.canning@wku.edu), to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, [haley.mctaggart@wku.edu](mailto:haley.mctaggart@wku.edu), if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

### **10. Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:**

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir

(270-745-6867 / [ena.demir@wku.edu](mailto:ena.demir@wku.edu)) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / [michael.crowe@wku.edu](mailto:michael.crowe@wku.edu)). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/titleix/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.