

Cricket, Law and Society

(Elective, Fall 2025)

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School: JGLS
Number of Credits: 4
Level: UG and PG

Course Description

This course concerns cricket's social and cultural life and meaning in a globalising world. In his celebrated book—*Beyond a Boundary* (1963)—C.L.R. James poses a provocative question: 'What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?' In many ways, this question takes us to the heart of this course on cricket, law and society. It seeks to read the game of cricket not simply as rule-bound actions unfolding on the field amenable to formal analysis but also as an activity informed by politics, history and society. Hence, rather than relying merely on a doctrinal view of sports law, this course will use interdisciplinary perspectives to explore the relationship between cricket, law and life.

The course consists of three interconnected parts. The first part maps the transformative journey of cricket as it travelled from England to the Indian subcontinent. How did cricket—a quintessentially British game—become so thoroughly vernacularised in India? We will also examine cricket's formative role in shaping cultural and political sensibilities. In many ways, the vernacularisation of cricket in India is equally a meta-narrative on caste, religion and nation.

The second part of the course explores the idea of law, codes and mores in cricket. What does it mean for cricket to embody the concept of the "spirit" of the game, a moral and ethical code which exceeds the fixity of written laws? Further, we will look at iconic cases where cricket was put on trial in different jurisdictions. Often constructed as public scandals ("it's not cricket"), the complexities of some of the recent cases around chucking, ball-tampering, "match-fixing" or racism demonstrate that cricket, like law and life, needs to be seen as a socially constructed phenomenon with varying interpretations. The course will also look at some of the legal issues concerned with the regulation of cricket and its "juridification" in India. In particular, the course will analyse the cases related to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and its role in regulating cricket in India.

The branding of cricket as a global sport and its increased commodification in the Twenty20 era have intensified ethical and legal debates. The third part of the course will deconstruct the so-called T20 revolution in cricket. Taking specific examples of T20 leagues (such as the IPL), we will examine how the newer formats have transformed cricket in terms of skills and strategies, playing culture and tactics, technology, and broadcasting. In this context, we will also scrutinise the increasing use of technologies in cricket adjudication and how these have impacted the role and authority of the on-field umpire. How has technology reconstituted the very nature and meaning of cricket? The last section of the course will specifically engage with issues emerging from the globalisation of cricket and its impact on playing culture, law and democratisation of the game.

Cricket, Law and Society will expose the student to diverse readings and disciplinary perspectives to explore and reflect upon mainstream discourses on sports,

law and society. It will also demonstrate how cricket makes competing pictures of rules, fair play and adjudication available—all of which inform our everyday imaginations of law, morality, ethics and justice. Students will be encouraged to document and analyse cases, allowing them to think of cricket as an essential site forging identity, politics and meaning of life.

Select References

- Fraser, David (2003), *Cricket and the Law*, Routledge.
- Gardiner, Simon (2001), *Sports Law*, Cavendish Publishing Limited.
- Greenfield, Steve and Guy Osborn eds. (2013), *Law and Sport in Contemporary Society*, Routledge.
- Guha, Ramchandra (2002), *A Corner of a Foreign Field*, Penguin Books Ltd.
- James, C. L. R. (1963), *Beyond a Boundary*, Pantheon Books.
- Nandy, Asish (1989), *The Tao of Cricket*, Viking Books.
- Wigmore, Tim and Freddie Wilde (2020), *Cricket 2.0: Inside the T20 Revolution*, Penguin.