Legal Studies

Legal Studies is offered as an elective at three year levels and can be undertaken for a semester or a full year. At Year 10 it exists as Great Australian Crimes and Trials in which students’ gain an understanding of basic legal concepts and the processes through an examination of infamous Australian cases such as Snowtown and the Backpacker Murders (Ivan Milat). In Year 10 students have an opportunity to engage in group work, participate in role plays, and reflect on the impacts these cases have affected Australian society. Alternatively, students can enroll in CSI: Whyalla, a legal studies-science course offered in semester two in which students apply forensic techniques to identify the criminal and apply their legal understanding to trialing the alleged offender.

Stage 1 Legal Studies provides for a more in-depth analysis and evaluation of the legal system. In semester one students undertake a variety of hands-on activities (including mock trials and debates), case studies, group work and individual reflection, students learn about the criminal justice system – how crimes are categorised and classified, how crimes are investigated by police, trial processes, and sentencing – and critique the relevant processes and procedures. This criminal justice focus culminates in a 4-day camp in Adelaide during which students attend court trials, visit Parliament House and Government House, participate in moots (legal debates) and present legal arguments in the Magistrates’ Court before a serving magistrate. In semester two students focus on civil law, and in particular the development of negligence law and reflect on such issues as whether it is appropriate for judges to make law and whether negligence law has ‘gone too far’. Students also study the federation movement and examine the Australian Constitution to determine whether this document is relevant in the 21st century. Students assume the role of politicians to investigate and debate these matters, and have an opportunity to take part in mock parliaments.

Stage 2 Legal Studies is a full-year subject that can contribute to a student’s TER (tertiary entrance rank). Topics studied are: The Australian Legal System; Constitutional Government; Law-making; and Justice Systems. The Stage 2 course provides an excellent foundation for students who wish to study law at university (much of the course is covered in first year law courses at uni). Legal Studies at either Stage 1 or 2 also provides useful background knowledge for students who are interested in pursuing law-related careers, such as criminology or policing, or careers where a basic understanding of the legal system is useful, such as social work and journalism.