UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Foundations of Business Law

2223-4-A5810235

Learning objectives

The course provides students with basic knowledge and understanding of both the historical and the economic foundations of three essential business law institutions such as corporations, bankruptcy, and insurance. These foundations are studied in order to allow students to acquire a critical understanding of current regulations of such institutions across modern legal systems.

Contents

The course focuses on three of the legal pillars of modern economies: corporations, bankruptcy, and insurance.
By combining history and economic analysis of law, the course is aimed at exploring the foundations on which these institutions have been built, in order to allow students to acquire a more solid knowledge and a more critical understanding of their current regulation across modern legal systems.
The course begins with an introductory part, aimed at setting the stage for the application of both historical and economic analysis of those topics. Then three parts follow, each one devoted to the study of each legal institution, by going through its historical development, as well as by reflecting on its economic rationales.

Detailed program

Program for attending students
Introduction
The functions of business law from an economic perspective: the basic analytical tools of law and economics.
History (From Dusk till Dawn) - Historiography (Law Merchant: Deconstructing a Myth).
Part I: Corporations
How to Do Business? Forms of Organization among Merchants.

The essential role of organizational law; characteristics and functions of the corporate entity.
Part II: Bankruptcy
Merchants in Trouble: The Consequences of Crisis and Failure of Business Undertakings.
The basic dynamics of the relationship between a firm and its creditors; the logic and limits of bankruptcy law.
Part III: Insurance
Shielding Business: The Historical Roots of Insurance.
Risk aversion and its implications; the insurance mechanisms; principles underlying the regulation of insurance contracts and firms.
Program for non-attending students
The same topics, as structured in the assigned readings.

Prerequisites

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Teaching methods

Lectures and problem-based discussions; slide show; reading of historical sources and documents; interaction by the e-learning course page.
The course is taught in English.

Assessment methods

Oral exam to assess the students' knowledge of the topics dealt with in the classes and in the materials provided by the teachers.
Other options of examination (e.g. research paper, oral presentation, written test) may be arranged for students attending classes.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

For attending students:
Notes and materials published on the e-learning website.

For non-attending students:

Historical texts

- From Lex Mercatoria to Commercial Law, ed. by V. Piergiovanni, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 2005 (Comparative studies in continental and Anglo-American legal history 24): pp. 53-67 (Cordes);
- The Courts and the Development of Commercial Law, ed. by V. Piergiovanni, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1987 (Comparative studies in continental and Anglo-American legal history 2): pp. 12-21 (Piergiovanni), 23-38 (Piergiovanni);
- The Company in Law and Practice: Did Size Matter? Middle Ages – Nineteenth Century, ed. by D. De

Ruysscher et al., Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2017 (Legal History Library 23), pp. 49-62 (Brunori), 63-83 (Amend-Traut);
- T. Kuehn, Debt and bankruptcy in Florence. Statutes and cases, in Quaderni storici, 46.2 (2011), pp. 355-390 (also available online at https://www.rivisteweb.it/issn/0301-6307/issue/3430);
- Marine Insurance. Origins and Institutions, 1300-1850, ed. by A.B. Leonard, Houndmills, Basingstoke Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 25-46 (Piccinno).

Economic analysis texts:

- R. KRAAKMAN ET AL., The Anatomy of Corporate Law, 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, 2017, Chapters 1, 2, 5;
- T.H. JACKSON, The Logic and Limits of Bankruptcy Law, Harvard University Press, 1986, Introduction and Chapters 1, 6, 8;
- D. SCHWARCZ - P. SIEGELMAN, *Law and Economics of Insurance*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Law and Economics: Volume 2: Private and Commercial Law*, edited by F. Parisi, OUP, 2017, pp. 481-508;
- T. BAKER- P. SIEGELMAN, *Behavioral Economics and Insurance Law*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Behavioral Economics and the Law*, edited by E. Zamir and D. Teichman, OUP, 2014, pp. 491-517;
- S.A. REA jr, The Economics of Insurance Law, in 13 *Int'l Rev. Law & Econ.* (1993), pp. 145-162.

Sustainable Development Goals

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