Law has played a central role in American history. From colonial times to the present, law has reflected the changing society in which legal decisions have been made and has played a powerful role in shaping that society, though not always in positive ways. American Legal History: A Very Short Introduction sheds light on the impact of law on several key social issues: Native American affairs, slavery, business, home life, and criminal and civil offences. The expansion of laws regarding property rights is also considered, as well as the evolution of criminal punishment, the rise of tort law after the Civil War; and the progress in legal education.

Environmental law is the law concerned with environmental problems. It is a vast area of law that operates from the local to the global, involving a range of different legal and regulatory techniques. In theory, environmental protection is obvious and ethically desirable. Yet, in practice, environmental law is a messy and complex business fraught with conflict. Environmental Law: A Very Short Introduction discusses the nature and practice of environmental law, and explores the role of lawmakers, courts, and regulators. It analyses why environmental law is both a fundamental and controversial area of law, dealing with multiple interests, socio-political conflicts, and the limits of knowledge about the environment, using examples from across the globe.


Anthony Arnall
European Law: A Very Short Introduction considers the laws and legal system of the European Union and discusses the range of issues that the European Union has been given the power to regulate, including the free movement of goods and people. It considers why an organization based on international treaties has proved capable of having far-reaching effects on both its Member States and on countries that lie beyond its borders, and discusses the effectiveness of its law and legal system in ensuring that Member States respect the commitments they made when they signed the Treaties.

Family Law: A Very Short Introduction
Jonathan Herring

Family Law: A Very Short Introduction provides insight not only into what family law is, but why it is the way it is. How have laws had to respond to social changes in family life? The last few decades have seen rising divorce rates and an increase in the use of surrogate mothers. How do family courts deal with the chaos of modern family life? Family law has recently been challenged to keep up-to-date with the social and scientific changes which affect it. What is a family? What makes someone a parent? What rights should children have? What will families look like in the years ahead? What new dilemmas will the courts face?

Forensic Science: A Very Short Introduction
Jim Fraser

Forensic Science: A Very Short Introduction introduces the concept of forensic science and explains how it is used in the investigation of crime. In forensic science, a criminal case can often hinge on a piece of evidence such as a hair, a blood trace, half a footprint, or a tyre mark. High profile cases have attracted enormous media attention and enhanced this interest in recent years. However, the public understanding of forensic science is poor, and largely based on TV shows. This VSI explains the principles of crime scene management, explores how forensic scientists work, and considers the techniques they use.

Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction
Andrew Clapham
Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction considers the controversies surrounding the human rights movement by focusing on highly topical issues such as torture, arbitrary detention, privacy, equality, health, and discrimination. It discusses the historical origins of human rights and how they are formed in law; explains what our human rights actually are; and considers where the human rights movement might be heading. Today, it is usually not long before a problem gets expressed as a human rights issue. Indeed, human rights law continues to gain increasing attention internationally, and must move quickly in order to keep up with a social world, which is changing so rapidly.

Siva Vaidhyanathan

Intellectual property is the most pervasive yet least understood way we regulate expression. Despite its importance to so many aspects of the global economy and daily life, intellectual property policy remains a confusing and arcane subject. Intellectual Property: A Very Short Introduction clarifies both the basic terms and the major conflicts surrounding this area of law, offering an introduction to copyright, patents, trademarks, and other forms of knowledge that are subject to global law and regulation. It illustrates the powers and limits of intellectual property, distilling the complex tangle of laws, policies, and values governing the dissemination of ideas, expressions, inventions, creativity, and data collection in the modern world.

International Law: A Very Short Introduction
Vaughan Lowe

Recently, interest in international law has increased greatly, largely because of its central place in discussions such as the Iraq War, the World Trade Organization, the Kyoto Convention, the situations in Palestine and Darfur, and the plights of refugees and illegal immigrants around the world. International Law: A Very Short Introduction explains what international law is, its role in international society, and how it operates. It examines what international law can and cannot do and what it is and isn’t doing to make the world a better place. It uses terrorism, environmental change, poverty, and international violence to demonstrate international law theories and practice, and how the principles can be used for international cooperation.
Law is at the heart of every society, protecting rights, imposing duties, and establishing a framework for the conduct of almost all social, political, and economic activity. Despite this, the law can seem highly technical, with its antiquated and often impenetrable jargon, obsolete procedures, and complex statutes and legislation. Law: A Very Short Introduction introduces the major branches of the law, describing what lawyers do and how courts operate, and considers the philosophy of law and its pursuit of justice, freedom, and equality. This second edition considers the pressures of globalization and digitalization on the law and the nature of the law in our culture of threatened security and surveillance.

Medical law is concerned with our bodies, and what happens to them during and after our lives. The core issues of medical law — organ transplantation, abortion, withdrawal of treatment, euthanasia, confidentiality, research on humans — affect us all. Medical Law: A Very Short Introduction explores different examples of these issues to illustrate the key problems and principles of medical law. When things go wrong with our bodies, we want to know what our rights are, and what governs the conduct of the clinicians into whose hands we put our lives and limbs. Dealing with matters of life and death, it can therefore have a fundamental impact on medical practice.

Military Justice: A Very Short Introduction presents an accessible and honest assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of military justice in both common law countries and those with other legal traditions, with particular emphasis on the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. It integrates a description of the US military justice system with a comparative view of civilian and foreign models for the administration of justice, including the increasingly important focus on human rights. The military is the rare part of contemporary society that enjoys the privilege of policing the behavior of its own members, with special courts and a separate body of rules.
The concept of law lies at the heart of our social and political life. Legal philosophy, or jurisprudence, explores the notion of law and its role in society, illuminating its meaning and its relation to the universal questions of justice, rights, and morality. Philosophy of Law: A Very Short Introduction analyses the nature and purpose of the legal system, and the practice by courts, lawyers, and judges. Referring to significant works by Ronald Dworkin, Scott Shapiro, John Finnis, and Neil McCormick, it reveals the intriguing and challenging nature of legal philosophy with clarity and enthusiasm, providing an enlightening guide to the central questions of legal theory.

The U.S. Constitution: A Very Short Introduction

David J. Bodenhamer

The U.S. Constitution: A Very Short Introduction explores the major themes of American constitutional history—federalism, the balance of powers, property, representation, equality, rights, and security. Informed by the latest scholarship, each theme illustrates how the Constitution has served as a dynamic framework for legitimating power and advancing liberty. Today, we face serious challenges to the nation’s constitutional legacy. Endless wars, a sharply divided electorate and deadlocked government, economic inequality, immigration, cybersecurity and privacy, and foreign interference in the nation’s democratic processes have placed demands on government and on society that test our constitutional values. Understanding how the Constitution has evolved will help us adapt its principles to the challenges of our age.

The U.S. Supreme Court: A Very Short Introduction

Linda Greenhouse

The U.S. Supreme Court: A Very Short Introduction tells the Court's story by drawing on its history and its written and unwritten rules to show how it really works. The Supreme Court today, housed in a majestic building on Capitol Hill, bears little resemblance to the ill-defined institution the Constitution's Framers launched. Their expectation was that it would be the weakest of the three branches of government. The Court put the independence the Framers gave it to use, and in many ways has continued to define itself. How do cases get
to the Supreme Court? What special role does the chief justice play? How does the Court relate to the other branches?