

**UNIVERSITÉ  
TOULOUSE  
CAPITOLE**



**TOULOUSE SCHOOL  
OF LAW**

**TOULOUSE  
SCHOOL OF LAW**

**SUMMER SCHOOL**

**QUANTITATIVE & AI TOOLS  
FOR EMPIRICAL LEGAL RESEARCH**

**JUNE 24 TO JULY 1 • 2025**

# EMPIRICAL LEGAL RESEARCH

Empirical legal research systematically applies empirical methods to collect, generate, and analyze data, aiming to produce substantive insights into legal phenomena. This type of research encompasses a methodical approach to gathering both qualitative and quantitative data, ranging from court decision content and interview transcripts to statistical counts of case occurrences or imposed fines. The core objective is to employ empirical data to not only derive knowledge about the law and its practical application but also to rigorously test theories and hypotheses concerning legal rules, their operations and their effects. By integrating empirical methods, this research framework strives to illuminate the dynamics of law within society, offering a grounded understanding that supports theoretical exploration and hypothesis testing.



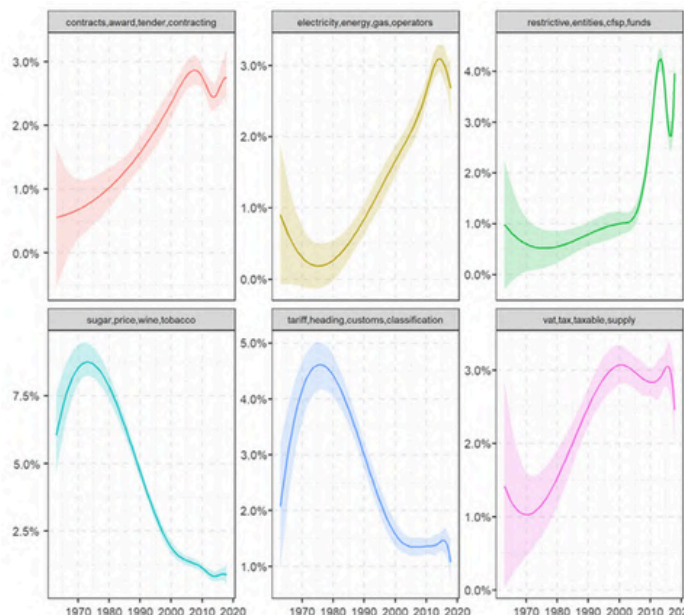
Van Kuppevelt et al. 2020

Inspired by methods used in the social and natural sciences, empirical legal research makes it possible to observe the behaviour of legal actors, gain a better understanding of how the law is produced and assess the impact of legal rules on reality. It can be used in all areas of law (private, public, history, etc.). It offers another way of describing and explaining the law and makes it possible to test hypotheses formulated by legal scholars. Its aim is also to contribute to an understanding of how the law operates in society.



## FOCUS ON QUANTITATIVE & AI TOOLS

The integration of AI techniques, such as topic modeling, natural language processing (NLP), and machine learning, along with quantitative methods including inferential statistics, experimental approaches, and network analysis, represents a transformative frontier in empirical legal research. These advanced tools unlock the potential to analyze vast quantities of legal texts and judicial decisions. For instance, NLP can dissect complex legal language, identifying patterns and themes that might elude traditional scrutiny, while topic modeling can illuminate the underlying structures within legal discourse, revealing insights that could reshape our understanding. Similarly, statistical methods enable researchers to draw robust conclusions from empirical data, and network analysis can map the intricate relationships within legal precedents, illustrating how legal principles interconnect and evolve over time.



Dyevre et al. 2021

Embracing these methods opens a new realm of possibilities for legal scholars, offering powerful tools to navigate the vast sea of legal texts and to craft more informed, data-driven arguments. This approach not only enhances the rigor and scope of legal research but also equips scholars with the skills to tackle contemporary legal challenges in a more systematic and evidence-based manner.



## A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

Aimed at legal scholars and Phd students in law, its objective is to give them the ability to develop an empirical research project in the field of law. The summer school provides accessible training in empirical legal research methods, taught by two internationally renowned researchers: the lessons will be taught in pairs by Prof. Arthur Dyevre (KU Leuven University, Belgium) and Prof. Gijs van Dijck (Maastricht University, Netherlands).

**PROFESSOR ARTHUR DYEVRE** is a researcher, writer and educator. His current research interests include judicial decision making, deceptive persuasion, behavioural comparative law (COMPASS Project) and inter-group biases in litigation. He teaches at the KU Leuven, the European University Institute (AI & Law Summer School) and Université Toulouse Capitole (ELR Summer School). He was Principal Investigator of the ERC-funded EUTHORITY Project, which delved into the dynamics of conflict and cooperation within the EU's multilevel legal system. His research lab in Leuven has promoted the use of empirical, experimental and machine learning methods in the legal field, organising inter alia the first two Conference in Empirical Legal Studies in Europe (CELS-E) in 2016 and 2018.



**PROFESSOR GIJS VAN DIJCK** integrates legal, empirical, and computational analysis in order to improve the description, application, understanding, and evaluation of the law. He has taught courses on tort law, contract law, property law, empirical legal research, and computational legal research. Gijs has published in top journals including the Journal of Empirical Legal Studies and the Oxford Journal of Legal Studies. He has been a speaker at various events, including ones at Oxford, Harvard, Yale, Duke and Cornell. He was a visiting scholar at Stanford University in 2011.





# SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAM

**TUESDAY, JUNE 24**

**Session #1 - Introduction, Basics, and Overview (9 am – 12 pm)**

In the first session, we will discuss how to enter the domain of empirical legal research. The instructors will share what they consider the potential, challenges, and their experiences regarding conducting empirical research in the legal domain.

The second part of the session will be devoted to the basics of empirical research. It will discuss the principles (reliability, validity), research designs (e.g., descriptive, causal), and data collection methods (inquiry, observation, analysis of existing data) of empirical legal research. Participants will then be invited to complete a questionnaire as well as several decision-making exercises. Depending on the pace of the session, the instructors may conduct an interactive game simulating a “dialogue of judges”.

**Mini talk - Study presentation (30 min)**

**Session #2 - Group Project & Introduction to Python Programming for Legal Research (1.30 pm – 4.30 pm)**

Groups will be formed for the group project. The substantive part of this session will focus on an introduction to programming in Python. Various statistical packages are available for conducting empirical research. Python has become the most popular programming language to collect, curate, format, and analyse data. Participants are introduced to the basics of the Python language via exercises and assignments. This session will lay the foundation for data analysis later in the course.

**Mini talk - Study presentation (30 min)**

**7 pm - Welcoming cocktail with a view on the Garonne River**





## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25

### **Session #3 - Network Analysis (9 am - 12 pm)**

This session focuses on network analysis. Network analysis allows modeling and analyzing connections between different entities: citations, individuals, organizations, etc. In this session, like in the legal field more generally, we will focus particularly on case law citations and litigation networks networks of jurists. Network analysis assists in detecting important precedents and (sub)topics in a network of court decisions. Students will practice collecting, formatting, and analysing real-world data using network science techniques. The instructors will illustrate the methods based on selections from their research.

#### **Mini talk - Study presentation (30 min)**

### **Session #4 - Experimental and Observational Methods (1.30 pm - 4.30 pm)**

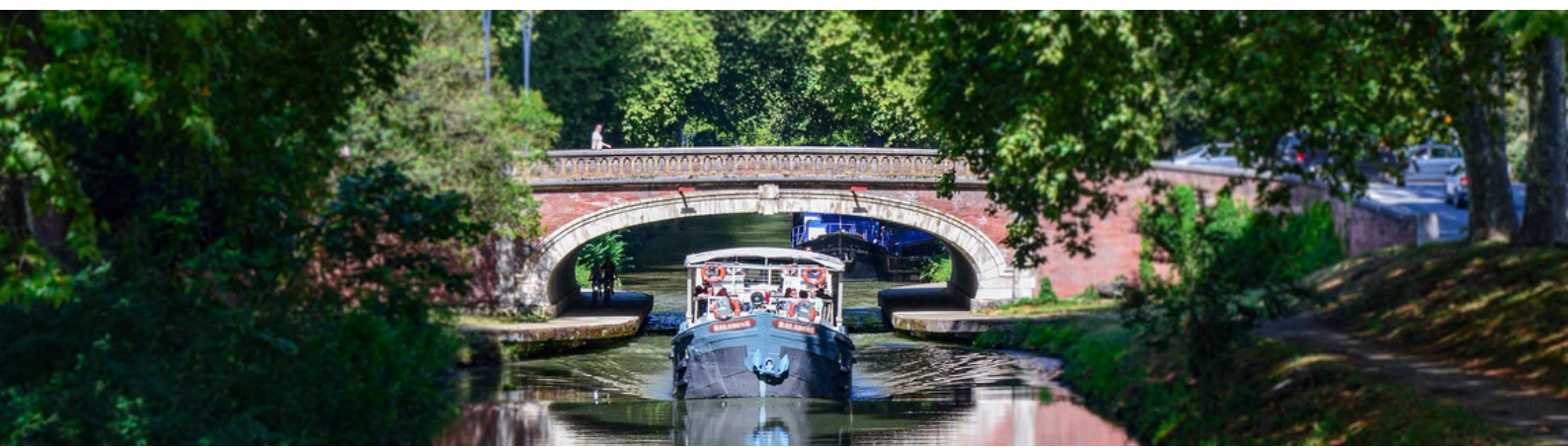
This session will be devoted to experiments and observational studies. The randomized trial represents the gold standard in causal inference. Experimental methods are increasingly used in the legal field, notably to evaluate the success of programs or reforms. We will examine different types: vignette experiment, field experiment, and survey.

Rulings, statutes, treaties, and most of what we spontaneously think of as legal data, is observational as opposed to experimental. It is often the only available data, but it presents challenges, particularly when identifying causal relations. In this session, we delve deeper into the advantages and limitations of the analysis of observational data and how to analyse data collected with observational analysis.

The instructors will illustrate the methods based on selections from their research.

#### **Mini talk - Study presentation (30 min)**

### **5 pm - Guided tour of Toulouse**





## THURSDAY, JUNE 26

### **Session #5 - Textual Methods (9 am - 12 pm)**

Legal data largely come in the form of texts. Advances in automatic text data analysis thus open up great prospects for empirical legal research. We examine document and topic modeling techniques and practice several exercises on texts of decisions of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT are becoming increasingly popular in analyzing legal texts. In this session, we will explore using LLMs for selected tasks hands-on.

### **Mini talk - Study presentation (30 min)**

### **Session #6 - Group projects (1.30 pm - 4.30 pm)**

This session is devoted to the group project. In a hands-on manner, a research plan will be designed and drafted. The instructors will provide feedback on the research designs and envisioned analysis.

## FRIDAY, JUNE 27

### **Session #7 - Data Collection Exercise (9 am - 10 pm)**

Students will participate in a collective data collection exercise. They will look for the raw data and encode it into a structured machine-readable format following a codebook. The results will be presented later during the Summer School.

### **Session #8 - Group project (10.15 am - 12 pm)**

This session is devoted to the group project. The research will be further designed and carried out. The instructors will provide feedback on the research designs and analysis.

### **Session #9 - Legal Data Analysis (1.30 pm - 4.30 pm)**

Your project will, at this point, have reached the stage of where you are exploring data collection or have started to analyze the data. This session dives deeper into how to conduct empirical analyses. This session will enhance your understanding of which and how statistical analyses can help improve your analysis. This session covers the basics of data analysis, including data harvesting, descriptive statistics, and regression analysis.

### **5 pm - Ice Cream Social**





**SATURDAY, JUNE 28 - SUNDAY, JUNE 29**

**Session #10 - Work on group project**

**MONDAY, JUNE 30**

**Session #11 - Feedback** (9 am - 12 pm)

Feedback will be provided by the instructors on the group projects.

**Session #12 - Work on group project** (1.30 pm - 4.30 pm)

This session will be devoted to finalizing the project.

**TUESDAY, JUNE 18**

**Session #12 - Presentations** (9 am - 12 pm)

**12 pm - Closing lunch at Aux pieds sous la table**

**Awarding of participation certificates**







# TERMS OF PARTICIPATION

## PREREQUISITES

This training programme is specifically designed for lawyers and law students with no experience in empirical research. **No specific statistical or mathematical knowledge is required.** Concepts and methods, including Python programming, are introduced in simple and intuitive terms with the help of multiple hands-on exercises. It is important to keep in mind that each session builds on the previous one. Therefore, "à la carte" participation is strongly discouraged.

Participants must possess a computer with a stable WiFi connection. In-class exercises will be done through Google Colab. To use it, participants must have a Gmail address.

**VENUE:** Manufacture des tabacs, 21 allée de Brienne, Toulouse (France)

**REGISTRATION FEE:** 230 euros

- Registration fees include welcoming cocktail, lunches, coffee breaks and a guided tour of the city of Toulouse.
- Registration is free for members of the Toulouse Capitole University.

**CAPACITY:** 25 students

## APPLICATIONS

Applications must be sent to [internationalisation@ut-capitole.fr](mailto:internationalisation@ut-capitole.fr) before **April 9, 2025** in the form of a CV and a letter setting out your motivation for attending the summer school. An answer will be provided before the mid-April to help you organise your stay in Toulouse.



### **SUGGESTED ACCOMMODATION**

- Hotel: Cité internationale des chercheurs de l'Université de Toulouse (from 85 euros/night)
- Youth Hostel: La Petite Auberge de Saint Sernin (from 25 euros/night)
- Youth Hostel: Hostel Toulouse Wilson (from 35 euros/night)

### **LUNCHES**

Lunches are taken at the Resto U' Arsenal from Tuesday June 24 to Friday June 27 and on Monday June 30. It is taken at Aux pieds sous la table restaurant on Tuesday July 1.

### **QUESTIONS:**

About the practical organization: [internationalisation@ut-capitole.fr](mailto:internationalisation@ut-capitole.fr)

About the content of the summer school: [julien.betaille@ut-capitole.fr](mailto:julien.betaille@ut-capitole.fr)

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