

Thesis-based LLM applications. Thesis Topic: Applicants must provide a statement of not more than 500 words. This is one of the most important parts of your application and the committee will review this statement very carefully. While you will not be tied to this statement should we decide to admit you (and indeed you can expect that your thesis statement will need to be re-worked many times even if you stick with the same topic) you should be aware that we will use this statement for at least two purposes. First, we will use it to try and determine who might be able to serve as a supervisor. And second, we will examine it to see if you have been able to articulate a specific research question. The research question should be fundamentally a legal question or a set of legal questions. Your proposed research may involve other disciplines or perspectives but there must be a legal issue or a set of legal issues. It is not enough for an applicant to describe a social, economic or environmental problem; you must also identify what the legal questions are. It will be beneficial to you if you are able to identify these questions with some level of precision.

The resource dimension to the principle of self-determination and distributive justice debates have led to the emergence of the resource rent distribution discourse. A survey of the literature on this discourse shows that while some jurisdictions employ more ‘direct’ approaches that allocate funds to citizens such as Alaska under the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend, other jurisdictions employ indirect approaches such as Norway’s public interest investment under the Government Pension Fund Global. Alaska pays funds to citizens from the royalties it receives from the occupation of public property for petroleum production activities, but Norway maintains a pool of funds from incomes received through petroleum taxation and joint venture activities. Alberta’s rent approach under its Heritage Savings Fund resembles Norway’s, but seems less impactful. Commentators and stakeholders have identified problems associated with both models of resource-rent distribution, especially on sustainable development (SD) concerns. My proposed research will examine and compare the legal regimes of both models in order to develop legal principles and concepts most desirable for oil rent distribution.

My research is in natural resource regulation. The topic I propose is “Legal regimes for oil rent distribution: the direct, indirect, or mixed model?” The thesis of my proposed study is that developing a mixed model of resource rent distribution through a legal regime incorporating both direct and indirect distribution is desirable, based on the peculiar circumstances of each jurisdiction, for maximizing petroleum resources and citizen satisfaction. This approach promises equity by catering for the interests of governments, citizens, and future generations. The study conceives, and will argue, that such a model will lead the path to achieving intragenerational and intergenerational equities as components of SD.

The proposed study plans to fill the gap in the literature on how law can drive the socio-economic effects such a mixed model would have on maximizing petroleum resources and government legitimacy through citizen satisfaction. It will attempt to answer the following questions:

- a. What are the problems facing the current oil rent distribution models?
- b. How should law improve the current oil rent distribution models?

The specific objectives of the study include establishing that: the existing oil rent redistribution models lack effectiveness, efficiency, equity, and legitimacy; the mixed model will benefit both development and the environment, hence promoting SD; and state peculiarities should determine how the mixed model should be adapted.

The proposed study will review the literature on conceptions of resource allocation and distribution to answer these questions, while elaborating the resource curse, 'Dutch disease' and 'petro-state' concepts. It will rely on both primary and secondary sources. It will be qualitative, and comparative, using Norway and Alaska as case studies for drawing lessons for Alberta.

The proposed study is feasible because the University of Calgary has expertise in natural resource law and international environmental law which are the two broad areas of the study. The case study jurisdictions have freedom of information statutes ensuring access to public documents. Its scope makes it possible to complete in a year. Its results will be published in a law journal.