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## Integrating Gender into Legal Education: The Obstacles, Challenges, and Possibilities

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# INTEGRATING GENDER INTO LEGAL EDUCATION: THE OBSTACLES, CHALLENGES, AND POSSIBILITIES

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## I. GENDER AND TEACHING LAW

There are many ways to introduce the gender perspective into the teaching of law, such as offering specialized courses, including new contents in basic courses, developing legal theory, developing legislative proposals, and systematizing the case law.

Each of these methods presents challenges and possibilities. The following is an effort to outline those challenges and possibilities.

## II. CURRICULA AND SYLLABI

As we all know, when we speak of the gender perspective, we do not refer to an area of specialized knowledge different from other areas, but rather to a different reading of the various disciplines we study. As Alda would say, speaking of a gender perspective is somewhat like putting on eyeglasses with a different lens to review texts that have already been read and to approach disciplines already studied, trying to find in them the inequalities underlying the female-male relationship. The introduction of the gender perspective into the law follows these same premises. The goal is to clarify the position of women and men in the law, which is often not made explicit in doctrine, legislation, or case law.

An initial difficulty that arises is the question of how best to introduce the gender perspective in a law school setting. There are at least two alternatives: creating a specialized course; or integrating this perspective into the general courses. The choice between these alternatives will depend on the human resources at hand, as well as the circumstances of each law school, and the professional mission of the university.

## III. SPECIALIZED COURSES

Creating a specialized course may be advisable when only a small group of people is committed to work on the gender perspective. In this way, the effort will be targeted towards preparing a single course, thereby optimizing the resources available. An initial problem we must face is where this course should be situated within the overall curriculum.

### *A. Offering the Course for Students Just Beginning or for Students Concluding Their Studies*

Here we face the following dilemma: should the course be directed to students in their first years, or instead to students who are concluding their studies? The decision must also be made as to whether the course should be compulsory or elective. Each of these alternatives will have favorable and unfavorable aspects.

#### *1. Offering the Course in the First Years*

The possibility of incorporating a course that introduces the gender perspective in the first years of the program of study makes it possible to work with students who have not yet grasped the legal system and its paradigms. As they learn about legal systems for the first time, students will examine, from the beginning, the gender