



## The Learner's Reading Ethos

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### Info Articles

#### Article History

Received : 2025-04-8

Revised: 2025-05-2

Published: 2025-05-30

#### Keywords:

*Dispute; breach of  
contract;  
compensation*

### Abstract

Reading ethos is a mental attitude and intellectual habit that is very important in the academic world, especially for students majoring in Constitutional Law who are required to understand normative, constitutional, and legal philosophical texts. In the context of academic ethics, reading is not merely a technical activity, but a form of intellectual responsibility towards knowledge. This paper aims to analyze how reading ethos can be a pillar of academic ethics and how it is applied in shaping the character of students who are critical, honest, and have integrity. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data obtained from literature studies and observations of student academic behavior. The results of the analysis show that students with a strong reading ethos tend to have the ability to think systematically, appreciate the scientific work of others, and uphold the value of academic honesty.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of higher education, reading is not merely a passive, mechanical activity, but rather a dynamic and multidimensional intellectual process. Reading plays a vital role in shaping a learner's mindset, academic character, and intellectual integrity.(Yunanto & Kasanova, 2023). Especially for students majoring in Constitutional Law, the ability to read critically, reflectively, and in-depth is essential for understanding the complex conceptual framework and practices of state administration. Normative texts such as constitutions, laws, court decisions, and legal theory and political philosophy literature require a high level of interpretive skills that cannot be achieved without a strong and sustained reading ethic.

Constitutional Law students are inherently positioned as aspiring public intellectuals. They are expected not only to understand legal texts literally but also to contextualize the dynamics of democracy, constitutionalism, human rights, and the system of government. Therefore, for law students, reading is not merely an academic tool, but rather the heart of all intellectual activity.(Patiung, 2016)This activity

trains reasoning skills, strengthens analytical skills, and builds a solid argumentative foundation in responding to contemporary issues that intersect with law and the state.

However, developments over time have shown a decline in the reading ethos among students, including those in law schools. This phenomenon is inextricably linked to the penetration of instant gratification culture resulting from advances in information technology, particularly social media and algorithm-based search engines. Rapid and instant access to information creates the illusion of knowledge, but lacks depth of understanding.(Hazan et al., 2025)Students tend to be more interested in summaries, excerpts, or popular opinions than in studying academic texts that require diligence and critical thinking. Reliance on unverified sources of information also fuels the spread of conceptual errors and erodes the foundations of systematic legal thinking.(Tahir et al., 2023).

This condition is exacerbated by the weak, deep-rooted culture of academic literacy.(Gamal & Halim, 2023)Many students still view reading as a burden, not an intellectual necessity. Low intrinsic motivation, a lack of familiarity from

previous levels of education, and a lack of stimulation from the academic environment contribute to the waning enthusiasm for reading. Yet, only through in-depth reading habits can students develop a rational, argumentative, and ethical understanding of law.

The ethos of reading in legal education is not only concerned with the quantity of reading, but more so with the quality of understanding, intellectual orientation, and academic honesty. (Btr et al., 2025) A student with a strong reading ethic will possess analytical sensitivity to legal substance, be able to connect various theories to constitutional practice, and avoid the trap of unfounded opinions. They will also be more protected from plagiarism, understanding the importance of respecting the scientific work of others through the use of legitimate citations and references.

More than that, reading functions as a vehicle for forming legal consciousness. (Batubara & Arifin, 2019) Through the habit of reading legal texts critically and contextually, students can develop an objective, independent, and responsible attitude in assessing legal issues in society. They are less easily swayed by tendentious legal narratives and, instead, are able to provide a balanced, rational, and justice-based legal perspective.

The reading ethos is also closely related to the development of a healthy academic culture. (Pratiwi & Roesminingsih, 2021) In higher legal education, collective efforts to foster an atmosphere that encourages reading are crucial. This includes providing up-to-date legal literature (both print and digital), strengthening the mandatory literature-based curriculum and scholarly discussions, actively exemplifying the role of lecturers as role models in scholarly reading and writing, and implementing a strict code of academic ethics against violations such as plagiarism and data fabrication.

Thus, strengthening the reading ethos cannot be viewed solely as an individual responsibility, but rather as part of an institutional strategy to produce law graduates who excel not only academically but also possess moral integrity and a strong ethical commitment. Within the

framework of developing quality legal human resources, reading must be a key pillar, as it is where the intellectual identity of a true learner is formed.

## **II. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature study method (library research). (Muhadjir, 2000) This study aims to explore in depth the relationship between reading ethos and students' academic ethics, particularly in the context of higher legal education, with a focus on Constitutional Law students.

The literature study method was chosen because it is relevant to examining theoretical concepts related to reading ethos, academic ethics, intellectual responsibility, and the development of students' scientific character. In the data collection process, the author reviewed various library sources consisting of scientific books, academic journals, previous research articles, and documents relevant to the topic.

The collected data was analyzed qualitatively using content analysis techniques. This analysis was conducted by identifying key themes emerging in the literature, such as the definition of reading ethos, its urgency in legal education, its relationship to scientific honesty, and its implications for developing students' character with integrity.

In addition, the author also conducted indirect observations of student academic behavior through documentation of academic activities, lecturer reflections, and scientific discussion results as complementary data to support the findings from the literature. The steps in this research include:

1. Identification and selection of literature relevant to the research theme.
2. Classification of sources based on the aspects discussed, such as reading ethos, academic ethics, and legal education.
3. Content analysis of literature to find patterns, relationships, and conceptual meaning.
4. Drawing conclusions based on the synthesis of collected theories and findings, and

adapted to the context of Constitutional Law students.

With this approach, the research is expected to provide a strong conceptual understanding of the importance of reading ethos as an integral part of developing academic ethics and intellectual character of students.

### **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **A. Understanding Reading Ethics from the Perspective of Academic Ethics**

Reading ethos is a mental attitude and intellectual commitment that reflects a spirit of learning, a high level of curiosity, and perseverance in exploring and understanding sources of knowledge.(Siringo-ringo et al., 2024)This ethos not only encompasses the frequency of reading, but also reflects the quality of one's interaction with the reading, both in understanding the context, analyzing the content, and critiquing the substance of the material read.

Within the framework of academic ethics, reading cannot be seen as a purely mechanical activity, but rather as a form of intellectual responsibility towards the process of searching for and developing knowledge.(Tobari, 2024)Students who uphold academic ethics will read with a focus on deep understanding, using their reading as a basis for critical thinking, and respecting the scientific work of others through honest and accurate citation.

On the other hand, reading without understanding will only make students mere information collectors, not knowledge processors.(Ahyar & Syahriandi, 2015)This is often seen in the practice of copying information from various sources without reading and understanding the contents thoroughly, an action that deviates from the values of academic integrity and can be classified as plagiarism.

A reading ethic also demonstrates the extent of a student's ethical awareness in the educational process. By consistently practicing reading, students will be better prepared to face scientific discussions, develop legal arguments, and produce valuable academic writing. This ethic forms the foundation for developing an honest, independent, and responsible academic character.(Siringo-ringo et al., 2024).

More than just a personal activity, a reading ethos also reflects the academic culture of an educational institution. If a reading culture is developed collectively within a campus environment through scientific discussions, seminars, literacy clubs, and literature-based assignments, the reading ethos will become part of the students' academic identity.(Jalaludin, 2024). In the context of Constitutional Law, mastery of constitutional discourse and classical and contemporary legal thought is largely determined by the ability to read actively and reflectively.

A good reading ethos also enables students to have critical thinking about legal and political realities, and not simply accept information without a filter.(Jalaludin, 2024)Constitutional Law students who are accustomed to reading in depth will be better able to connect legal theory with current socio-political phenomena, thus fostering a responsible intellectual attitude in expressing argumentative and constructive legal views. In practice, strengthening the reading ethos must begin early by instilling academic ethical values in every learning process, whether through the curriculum, the role of lecturers, or campus academic policies. Students should be encouraged to:

- a) Not just reading to complete assignments, but reading to understand and develop yourself;
- b) Develop critical reading skills for legal and social texts;
- c) Making reading a daily habit strengthens their reasoning skills and academic responsibility.

Such a reading ethos will strengthen students' capacity as academics with integrity, oriented towards science, and ready to be part of the solution to future state problems.

#### **B. The Urgency of a Reading Ethic for Constitutional Law Students**

A reading ethos plays a crucial role in developing the academic and professional competencies of Constitutional Law students. As aspiring intellectuals who will work in the legal and public policy arenas, students in this field are

required to possess a deep, critical, and systematic understanding of legal theories, constitutional texts, and the dynamics of state governance at both the national and global levels.(Gafur, 2015).

Amidst the complexity of legislation and the dynamics of legal politics, students who lack a reading ethos will tend to have only a textual and narrow understanding. Conversely, students who make a habit of reading seriously will be able to:

- a) Understand the difference between rule of law and rule by law conceptually;
- b) Analyze constitutional changes from the perspective of philosophy and legal history;
- c) Assess state policies based on the principles of constitutionality and democratic principles.

Furthermore, students with a strong reading ethos will be better prepared to keep up with the ever-evolving dynamics of constitutional law. This is crucial considering that law is not a static entity, but rather a product of constantly changing social, political, and cultural processes. Therefore, reading serves as a key bridge for students connecting theory and practice, norms and reality.

The reading ethos also has a direct impact on students' critical and logical thinking abilities.(Rahma et al., 2024)This skill is essential for understanding various constitutional cases, such as judicial reviews in the Constitutional Court, conflicts of authority between state institutions, and issues related to elections, human rights, and the presidential system. Without in-depth reading, students lose context and tend to be reactive or emotional in their responses to legal and political issues.

Not only that, the ethos of reading is an important asset in writing legal scientific works, such as papers, journals, theses, or even academic manuscripts for draft laws.(Rahma et al., 2024)Without a systematic and balanced understanding of various sources, student writing will be little more than a series of quotations without synthesis or analysis. Yet, in the academic world, a person's thinking power is determined by their ability to connect ideas, construct arguments, and formulate solutions based on quality reading.

Therefore, the urgency of a reading ethos for Constitutional Law students is not only related to academic achievement, but also to character development as rational, objective legal practitioners with intellectual integrity. Reading is no longer an option, but rather a necessity in shaping a legal generation sensitive to justice and change.(Rahma et al., 2024).

In the long term, students who cultivate a reading ethos during their college years will have a competitive advantage over those who rely on memorization or simply follow the flow of information without critical analysis. Amidst the rapid flow of globalization and information transparency, the ability to read selectively, deeply, and analytically is a key weapon for remaining relevant and competitive in the legal world.(Siringo-ringo et al., 2024).

The ethos of reading also trains students to develop a scientific attitude in thinking and responding to differing views. In the study of Constitutional Law, there are often many different approaches and schools of thought in understanding systems of government, power relations, and constitutional interpretation. Through reading, students are encouraged to appreciate the diversity of academic views and formulate their opinions based on theoretical foundations and valid data, rather than solely on emotions or political sentiment.(Rahma et al., 2024).

Herein lies the strategic value of a reading ethos: as a tool for developing an intellectual personality that is democratic and open, yet critical and responsible. Students who develop a reading ethos will be better prepared to contribute to public discourse and generate constitutionally based solutions to national problems.

Therefore, instilling a reading ethos requires serious attention from higher education institutions, particularly law faculties. Lecturers, curricula, and academic policies must be geared toward fostering a love of legal literacy from an early age. This is not merely about producing intelligent graduates, but also about developing legal professionals who are aware of their ethical

and intellectual role in upholding the dignity of the constitution and the rule of law.

### C. Reading as an Academic Responsibility

In an academic environment, reading is not only a means of acquiring information, but also a manifestation of students' moral and intellectual responsibility towards knowledge. This responsibility arises because students are part of a scientific community built on honesty, integrity, and intellectual hard work. Therefore, reading critically, deeply, and systematically is an inherent obligation of every learner.(Jalaludin, 2024).

In the context of academic ethics, reading isn't just about completing assignments or preparing for exams. Students who make reading a part of their academic routine demonstrate an understanding of their active role as learning subjects, not simply recipients of lecturer material. This also indicates that the student has developed academic awareness, namely the awareness to cultivate knowledge not only for personal gain but also to contribute to society and civilization.(Btr et al., 2025).

Responsible reading is also closely related to healthy academic practices. A student who truly reads will:

- a) Be more careful in citing sources, not just copying without understanding;
- b) More daring in conveying original ideas, because they have a strong reading background;
- c) Be more critical of the content of the reading, do not easily accept information without rational consideration;
- d) More accustomed to constructing arguments logically and scientifically, which is proven in written work and class discussions.

Conversely, avoiding the habit of reading is the beginning of a reliance on instant sources and a decline in analytical skills. In the long term, this can lead to ethical violations such as plagiarism, data fabrication, and even intellectual duplicity. Therefore, making reading an academic responsibility is also a preventative measure against the moral degradation and quality of higher education.(Baskoro et al., 2025).

In the legal world, this becomes particularly relevant. Law demands argument, and argument is born from reading. Constitutional Law students are required to read with an analytical orientation toward legal norms and understand the accompanying historical and sociological context. Without in-depth reading, students will have difficulty distinguishing between valid legal interpretations and mere personal opinions that cannot be scientifically justified.(Ahyar & Syahriandi, 2015).

Therefore, reading must be instilled as a value, not a burden. Campuses, lecturers, and students must work together to build a reading culture grounded in integrity, curiosity, and responsibility. Only in this way can academic ethics be truly realized in students' scientific lives.(Siringo-ringo et al., 2024).

In academic practice, responsible reading is also reflected in students' ability to distinguish between fact, opinion, and interpretation in legal sources. This is crucial because in constitutional law, there are numerous approaches to interpreting the constitution, state power, and the relationship between legislative, executive, and judicial institutions. Without the habit of critical reading, students tend to take references at face value and only understand the surface of legal texts, not their contextual meaning.(Patiung, 2016).

Academic responsibility in reading also requires students to compare various sources, both in terms of content, authorial authority, and relevance to the legal topic being studied. This will broaden their perspective and foster a more nuanced mindset. In studying constitutional law, for example, students are required to read not only the 1945 Constitution but also scholarly works on comparative presidential systems in various countries, Constitutional Court decisions, constitutional law journals, and even critiques from legal and political figures.

Furthermore, reading as a form of academic responsibility also means seeking scientific truth through an honest and ethical intellectual process. Students should avoid the tendency to read selectively only to strengthen personal arguments (confirmation bias), without opening up space for

alternative thoughts that may be more relevant or profound. Openness to diverse sources and perspectives is part of academic integrity that must be developed from an early age.(Ahyar & Syahriandi, 2015).

In this context, lecturers also have a strategic role in guiding students to read not only to find the "right answer," but also to understand legal thought processes and develop argumentative skills. Assessment of assignments or papers should not be based solely on the number of pages or sources cited, but also on the extent to which students demonstrate understanding, analytical acumen, and originality of ideas from their reading.

Furthermore, reading, as an academic responsibility, also forms the basis for developing legal reasoning skills, namely the ability to construct arguments based on norms, facts, and logic. This is extremely useful not only in writing academic papers but also in preparing for oral exams, participating in legal debate competitions, drafting legal opinions, and even in future courtroom practice.

#### **D. Strategies for Strengthening the Reading Ethic among Constitutional Law Students**

Cultivating and strengthening a reading ethos among students, particularly in the field of Constitutional Law, cannot be achieved overnight. A sustainable, multidimensional approach is required, involving the active participation of students, lecturers, and educational institutions as a unified academic ecosystem. A reading ethos must be cultivated not as an administrative burden, but as a living, evolving academic cultural value within every campus individual. The following are several strategies that can be implemented practically and conceptually.(Siringo-ringo et al., 2024).

##### **1. Integration of Critical Reading in the Curriculum**

One strategic step is to integrate reading activities as part of the curricular assessment, not just as an additional assignment. Lecturers not only assign students to read but also assess how students process the reading into scientific understanding and argumentation. For example,

in a Constitutional Law course, students are asked to read and analyze Hans Kelsen's views on the basic norm (Grundnorm) and compare it with Carl Schmitt's critique of the state of emergency and sovereignty. This assignment is not simply a summary, but rather an analytical review that demands conceptual understanding, comparative analysis, and critical reflection on its relevance in the current Indonesian context.(Patiung, 2016).

##### **2. Building a Reading-Based Discussion Culture**

Scholarly discussions are highly effective tools for fostering active and productive reading habits. Forums such as discussion classes, study groups, constitutional studies, and even mini-seminars among students encourage participants to read before expressing their opinions. By using reading as the basis for speaking, students learn to value literary arguments, not just personal opinions. Furthermore, discussions enrich understanding by absorbing diverse perspectives from fellow readers.

##### **3. Improving Access to Legal Literature and Information Literacy**

Often, low interest in reading is not simply due to laziness, but rather to limited access to credible and relevant reading resources. Therefore, campuses need to provide:

- a. Comprehensive and up-to-date digital and physical libraries;
- b. Access to national and international scientific journals, such as HeinOnline, JSTOR, Scopus, and Google Scholar;
- c. Information literacy training enables students to assess the validity, authority, and relevance of legal sources. This way, students will not only be avid readers but also be guided in selecting quality reading materials that will support the development of their legal knowledge.
- d. Lecturer Exemplary Behavior and Relevance of Reading Material.

Lecturers play a strategic role as intellectual role models for students. When lecturers demonstrate a passion for reading, provide valuable quotations from literature, and facilitate discussions based on reading, students will perceive reading as important and beneficial.

In addition, lecturers must be able to connect reading materials with current constitutional law issues, such as the latest Constitutional Court ruling, the presidential threshold issue, or the debate on amendments to the 1945 Constitution. This will stimulate students' interest in reading because they see firsthand the relevance between theory and reality.

#### 4. Implementation of Firm Sanctions and Ethical Appreciation

To create an academic culture of integrity, educational institutions must firmly and consistently enforce academic ethics standards. Students found to have failed to read or committed plagiarism should be subject to academic sanctions in accordance with campus regulations. Conversely, students who demonstrate a commitment to reading, writing, and conveying original ideas should be rewarded, such as:

- a. Best written work certificate,
- b. Publication of essays in faculty journals,
- c. Delegates to national debate competitions or legal conferences.
- d. Through a combination of reward and consequence, the ethos of reading will become more ingrained as part of the academic character of law students.

By implementing these strategies sustainably and consistently, strengthening the reading ethos will not stop at the level of normative discourse alone, but will become a real practice in the academic lives of Constitutional Law students. Students who read consciously and responsibly will become legal intellectuals with integrity, broad insight, and the ability to advocate for justice based on a strong scientific foundation.

## IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

### A. Conclusion

A reading ethos is not merely a habit, but rather an essential academic value and responsibility in shaping student character, particularly in the field of Constitutional Law. In this discipline, students are required to understand legal theory, the constitution, and the ever-evolving dynamics of state administration. Therefore, reading becomes a primary foundation

for developing analytical skills, critical thinking, and integrity in developing legal arguments. A reading ethos is also closely linked to academic ethics, as it reflects honesty and intellectual responsibility in the scientific process.

Constitutional Law students with a strong reading ethos will be better prepared to face legal challenges, both in the academic realm and in professional practice. More than an individual obligation, reading is part of a collective ethical system that requires structural support, including a literacy-based curriculum, a culture of scholarly discussion, adequate access to literature, and exemplary teaching practices from lecturers. Therefore, strengthening the reading ethos is not merely an educational strategy but a crucial step in producing a generation of intelligent, ethical, and justice- and public-interest-oriented law graduates.

### B. Suggestion

To foster a strong and sustainable reading ethos among Constitutional Law students, collaborative efforts from various parties are required. Students need to develop a personal awareness that reading is a long-term investment essential for academic and professional achievement. Meanwhile, lecturers, as educators, are expected to serve as role models by guiding students to read critically and reflectively, not merely technically. Higher education institutions also play a crucial role by providing adequate access to legal literacy and encouraging the formation of literacy communities, such as legal study forums or reading clubs. Furthermore, academic policies should emphasize students' ability to understand and process reading material, not just completing assignments or memorizing material. Through this comprehensive approach, a reading culture can grow holistically and have a tangible impact on the quality of future law graduates.

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