Statutory Interpretation: A Code

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Statutory interpretation in its broadest sense is the process of determining the true meaning of a written document. The Interpretation Act 1978 provides limited scope to assist judges with statutory interpretation in that it only provides standard definitions to common provisions such as a rebuttable presumption that terminology in the masculine gender also include the feminine, and that the singular includes plural. In contrast, civil law is based upon provisions of codes and statutes, from which solutions to particular cases are to be derived. Common law courts use the adversarial system, in which two sides present their cases to a neutral judge.
A statute's structural features, such as its degree of transitivity, will control the applicability of many standard canons of interpretation. One of the most familiar canons is ejusdem generis: "where general words follow an enumeration they are to be held as applying only to persons and things of the same general kind or class specifically mentioned."
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