

COURSE SYLLABUS

POLITICAL SCIENCE 325: FAMILY LAW Spring 2023 (3 semester hours)

**This course is web-based w/ live lectures.
Live Lecture: Mondays, 7:20 –10:00 PM**

Instructor: Rachel L. Flatt
Office Location: Ferguson Social Sciences Room 152
Office Hours: Mondays after class for 30 minutes (*or by appointment*)
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Required Texts

Textbook

William P. Statsky, Family Law, 7th 21 Edition; Cengage Learning; ISBN-9781337917537

Texas Family Code

HTML version at: <https://stautues.capitol.texas.gov/>

PDF version at: <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/SDocs/FAMILYCODE.pdf>

Course Description

This course focuses on all aspects of family law including without limitation, premarital agreements, traditional marriage and alternatives, divorce, spousal/child support, property division, child custody, paternity and adoption. The focus of the text is on the current state of family law in today's culture and the attorney paralegal team within it.

Course Objectives/Goals

The goal of this course is to enable the student to:

Identify the issues related to family law matters including the filing of lawsuits, motions, pretrial, and post-trial proceedings.

Understand the role of the paralegal as a legal professional and related ethics in regard to pre-trial and post-trial proceedings.

Learn how to draft various family law related documents.

Understand and analyze issues related to family law matters, procedural rules, and laws and the effect of those issues in the pursuit of family law litigation.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is required and roll will be taken at every class. It is vital to attend each class as we only meet once per week.

Attendance/participation contributes 10% of the total final grade. The following table illustrates how missed classes will affect this portion of your overall grade:

<u>Classes missed</u>	<u>% deduction from attendance/participation</u>
1	0%
2	2%
3	5%
4 or more	10% and possible failure of class

Grading Policy

This class will be taught using the Socratic Method as well as lecture. You may be called on at any time and are expected to be fully prepared to discuss the assigned reading material. This is a cumulative grade over the course of the semester.

You are also responsible for completing the assignments listed in this syllabus. The assignments may be found within the chapters of the textbook and in handouts I will provide to you. If the assignment is a group assignment, you will be responsible for choosing your group members. A group may consist of 2 to 3 people. Your assignments will be reviewed, graded and returned to you. This is a cumulative grade over the course of the semester.

All assignments must have a cover page indicating the following: your name, class, name of the assignment, and date the assignment is due. All assignments must be stapled. A deduction of 10 points will be assessed to all assignments turned in without stapling or without a cover page.

Case briefs, take-home exams, homework assignments, and any other written work are due at the beginning of the class period indicated in this syllabus. All written work will be graded not only on content, but also on writing style, **including punctuation and grammar**. You are expected to submit case briefs, homework, and take-home exams on time. Exceptions will be granted only under the most EXTREME, verifiable circumstances.

The examinations will primarily consist of multiple choice, true/false, definition, and short answer questions. If an exam is take-home, any collaboration with other students with regards to the substance of the exam will result in a failing grade.

Your grade will be calculated according to the following formula:

Attendance/Participation	10 points
Assignments	30 points
Test 1	20 points
Test 2	20 points
Test 3	<u>20 points</u>
TOTAL	100 points

Grade Distribution is as follows:

A = 90-99

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 65-69

F = 64 and below

(No extra credit work will be allowed)

Student Conduct and Etiquette

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct.) You are expected to exhibit respect for the instructor and fellow students at all times. All electronic devices (except laptops) must be turned off during class. Laptop use is limited to reading notes made for class and taking notes during class. In the event you choose to use a laptop, sound features must be disabled. Surfing the internet and playing games on your laptop during class time are strictly prohibited. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in removal from class.

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services East Texas A&M University

Velma K. Waters Library Room 162

Phone: (903)886-5150 or (903)886-5835

Fax: (903)468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Non-discrimination notice

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Statement regarding on campus firearms

Texas Senate Bill-11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and East Texas A&M University Rule 34.06.02R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer

to

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatments/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>) and/ or consult your event organizer). Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M University campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

Statement regarding Counseling

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M University, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel.

“What is Plagiarism

Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work, or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense:

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means

1. to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
2. to use (another's production) without crediting the source
3. to commit literary theft
4. to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

But can words and ideas really be stolen?

According to U.S. law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

All of the following are considered plagiarism:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules)

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism. If you have retained the essential idea of an original source, and have not cited it, then no matter how drastically you may have altered its context or presentation, you have still plagiarized.” (www.plagiarism.org)

If you plagiarize, you will receive an F for the assignment in question and the matter will be referred to the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Technology Requirements LMS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

Access and Navigation

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

Communication and Support

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

As Instructor, I reserve the right to amend, modify, or alter this syllabus as the situation may require.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1

01/13 Chapter 1: Introduction to Family Law and Practice
Chapter 2: Ethics in a Family Law Practice

Week 2

01/20 NO CLASS – UNIVERSITY CLOSED IN OBSERVANCE OF MLK, JR. DAY

Week 3

01/27 Chapter 4: Premarital, Postnuptial, and Cohabitation Agreements
Tex. Family Code Secs. 1.108-1.109, 4.001 – 4.010

Week 4

02/03 Chapter 5: Marriage
Tex. Family Code Chapter 2
Homework 1: Draft a Petition

Week 5

02/10 **Test 1**

Week 6

02/17 Chapter 6: Annulment
Tex. Family Code Chapter 6
Homework 2: Draft an Answer

Week 7

02/24 Chapter 7: Divorce Grounds and Procedure
Tex. Family Code Chapter 6
Homework 3: Draft a Decree

Week 8

03/03 Chapter 8: Spousal Support, Property Divisions, and the Separation Agreement
Tex. Family Code Chapters 7 and 8, Sec. 3.402

Week 9

03/10 **Spring Break**

Week 10

03/17 Chapter 9: Child Custody
Tex. Family Code Secs. 153.001 – 153.0071, 153.009, 153.071 –
153.193, 153.251 – 153.317
Homework 4: Draft a SAPCR

Week 11

03/24 Chapter 10: Child Support
Tex. Family Code Secs. 154.001 – 154.131
Homework 5: Draft a Modification

Week 12

03/31 **Test 2**

Week 13

04/07 Chapter 12: Legal Rights of Women

Week 14

04/14 Chapter 13: Illegitimacy and Paternity
Chapter 14: The Legal Status of Children
Tex. Family Code Secs. 160.001 – 160.707

Week 15

04/21 Chapter 15: Adoption
Tex. Family Code Secs. 162.001 – 162.306, 162.501 – 162.507

Week 16

04/28 New and Emerging Issues in Family Law

Week 17

05/05 **Test 3**