



SWK 514.01/02W: Social Work and the Law
COURSE SYLLABUS
Summer 2025
Web-Based

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dawn Nelson, LCSW-S, ACSW, SAP, CART
Office Location: Online
Office Hours: By appointment
Office Phone: 972-989-2799
Office Fax: 903-468-3227
University Email Address: Dawn.Nelson@tamuc.edu
Preferred Form of Communication: Email
Communication Response Time: **Within 2 business days,
except on weekends**

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook(s) Required:

No textbook is required for this course. Materials will be made available throughout the weeks.

Software Required:

MyLeo
D2L Brightspace,
Zoom platform

[Waters Library](#) Search Engine

https://tamuc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/account?vid=01TEXAM_COM:DEFAULT§ion=overview

Microsoft Office 365

Access FREE at:

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/facultystaffservices/academictechnology/documents/Office-365-Students.pdf>

Optional Texts and/or Materials:

All MSW students must purchase the following study materials to **prepare for the Graduate Comprehensive Exam** they will take in their final semester. You must pass the exam to receive your degree. It is never too early to begin studying for the exam.

[Comprehensive Study Guide](#) (Masters, Clinical, Adv. Generalist) Version 9.0. Social Work Examination Services.

To purchase access: <https://swes.net/all-products/#~:text=Masters%2C%20Clinical%2C%20Adv.%20Generalist>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This elective introduces students to the intricacies of the United States legal system. Course content will delve into the connection between social work and the legal system, including constitutional rights, rights granted by law and other protections within administrative proceedings, civil proceedings, and the criminal justice system at the local, state and federal levels of government. Special attention will be paid to the rights of community members under the U.S. Constitution, U.S. code and other laws that grant protections against violation of a person's rights.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER COURSES

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) requires a competency-based approach to identify and assess what students demonstrate in practice. In social work, this approach involves assessing students' ability to demonstrate the competencies identified in the educational policy. Listed below are the competencies and associated knowledge, skills, values and cognitive and affective processes that comprise the expected outcomes for this course.

	Activity/Assessment	Dimension
Competency 1:		

	Activity/Assessment	Dimension

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

In this course, you will utilize the Learning Management Systems (LMS) D2L for instructional and learning opportunities, submitting assignments, participating in online synchronous and asynchronous discussions, accessing resources, and completing quizzes/tests. Additionally, you will need the knowledge and skills to use Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Outlook Email. If you have any issues with using the various systems or software, you must contact support services and notify the Instructor of the technical issue.

Instructional Methods

It is suggested that the student:

- To understand the commitment that you have made to yourself and to this program upon admission, which is to learn the skills required to be an effective social worker
- To attend class regularly (or keep up with the material), of course, but also to be engaged, alert and committed to its purpose throughout the course and not let distractions interfere with the learning process.
- To read the textbook as required per the schedule
- To complete assignments and TK20 paperwork in a timely manner and within the standard and instructions set out in the syllabus and by the professor
- To reach out for help when in need of additional guidance
- To not wait until the end of the semester or the day of the deadline to reach out for such help
- To prioritize your education for the time that you are in the program

Student Responsibilities and Tips for Success in the Course

As a student in this course, you are responsible for engaging in active learning and reaching out to the Instructor if problems or challenges interfere with optimal learning. Communication is vital when engaged in a fully online, virtual environment.

Expectations for success include:

1. Always demonstrate professional behavior, including respect for the Instructor and peers; being open to feedback and guidance throughout this class and the program.
2. Adhered to the School of Social Work and University student code of conduct and NASW Code of Ethics.

3. Begin reading the assigned text and supplemental readings as soon as possible, focusing on completing all readings prior to engagement with the Instructor or peers.
4. Prepare to engage in live class sessions, discussions, and other activities so you can be a contributor as well as a receiver of knowledge and skills.
5. Actively participate in engagement activities, including live virtual class sessions, online discussions, and interactive learning opportunities -as this is vital for learning and success in both this course and the program.
6. Work ahead when possible. Completing assignments ahead of the due date so you are prepared to submit on the due date.
7. Sign in to the D2L course shell multiple times weekly to access updated announcements or posted resources.
8. Check your university email daily. This is the university, department, and Instructor's official method of communication.
9. Be open and focused on the "process" and not the "product," as earning this degree requires time, effort, work, growth in knowledge, skills, and abilities, along with personal and professional attributes.

GRADING

Final grades in this course is based on the following scale:

360-400	A
320-359	B
280-319	C

Grades below a C are considered failing the class

DUE DATE POLICY

Late work will have an automatic 15-point deduction.

All work must be completed by the last day of class.

Assessments	Value
Law Scavenger Hunt	100
Interview	200
Advocacy Video	100
TOTAL	400 pts.

Assessments

1. **SCAVENGER HUNT ON THE LAW (100 pts.):** You will be given ten questions about Texas and federal laws. You will need to find the answers by looking up the legal statutes. **See Rubric in Appendix A**

2. **INTERVIEW (200 pts.):** Students are to interview a professional currently active in the legal field (see sample list below). Students shall conduct a thorough interview regarding the person's duties, experience and nature of their work. You will need to set this interview up yourself. The interview should be conducted in person, on the phone, via Zoom or another method. You may consider an office visit with the professional, ride-along with a patrol officer, or another similar activity where you are visiting a law enforcement work site or the work site of the person you have chosen to interview. For this interview, students are to write a 3-4 page paper with the information learned from the interview (paraphrase the input from the interview), and relate what was gained about the person's official duties and information on their agency as it relates to rights of citizens, contact with victims, and other vulnerable populations. This is not a research paper. There is no need to use sources outside your interview subject unless they require you to do so. **Please include the name and email address of the person that you interviewed in the comments box when you upload the paper.** This assignment should be submitted in APA format, including a cover page. You will upload it in the Assignments section to the "Interview Paper" submission folder on D2L Brightspace. **See Rubric in Appendix B**

Example of personnel to interview:

ICE Officer	Jury Coordinator
Criminal Investigator	Law Clerk
Customs Officer	Legal Researcher
Deputy U.S. Marshal	Paralegal
Environmental Protection Agent	Public Information Officer
Federal Agency Investigator	Victim Advocate
Forensic Scientist	Prosecutor
Insurance Fraud Investigator	Clerk of Court
Loss Prevention Officer	District Attorney
Park Ranger	Juvenile Magistrate
Police Dispatcher	Law Librarian Mediator
Polygraph Examiner	Public Defender
Private Investigator	Defense Attorney
State Trooper	Trial Court Administrator
BATF Agent	In-court Interpreter
Border Patrol Agent	Pre-sentence Investigator
Secret Service Agent	Juvenile Detention Officer
Postal Inspector	Fugitive Apprehension Officer
Police Officer	Drug Court Coordinator
Police Administrator	Correctional Officer
Military Police Officer	Community Liaison
Highway Patrol Officer	Officer Corrections
Fingerprint Technician	Dietary Officer
FBI Special Agent	Home Detention Supervisor
Criminal Profiler	Job Placement Officer
Deputy Sheriff	Juvenile Probation Officer
Drug Enforcement Officer	Parole/Probation Officer
Arbitrator Bailiff	Prison Industries Warden or
Court Reporter	Superintendent
Judge	

3. **ADVOCACY VIDEO (100 pts.):** You and your partner will create a video that highlights a specific aspect of the legal system you believe needs reform. You and your partner will take opposing sides of the issue. You will have a discussion in which you and your partner discuss and attempt to convince the other person of the validity of your viewpoint. You will use at least three sources (peer-reviewed or scholarly) to support your stance. You will incorporate the references to appeal to your audience, the public and legislators. **NO notes, PowerPoint, cue cards allowed.** Remember you need to appeal to those people who may disagree with you so your intonation and word choice are important. References should be submitted in the thread section under the link provided for submissions in the Discussion section of D2L. The thread will be located in D2L on the week the assignment is due. Be certain each student's name is on the project for credit to be received. **See Rubric in Appendix C**

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce 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

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

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 library, 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>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor via email. The Instructor will respond to email queries within two business days.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may require the Instructor to modify it during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Ethical Behavior

The School of Social Work expects all students to conduct themselves in an ethical, professional manner in the classroom and field settings consistent with the [NASW Code of Ethics](#).

University Code of Conduct

Texas A&M University-Commerce has established standards of conduct to create and foster an environment that facilitates student learning and development. Students and university student groups are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates respect for the rights and property of others and is consistent with the educational goals and mission of the university. This Code of Student Conduct ("Code") focuses on personal responsibility and accountability for students' actions and the impact those actions may have on the greater community. To access student academic and behavioral expectations for students refer to the [Student Guidebook](#).

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage (or copy/paste the following URL in your web browser:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>)

If a student believes the final grade is unfairly impacted by attendance requirements, an appeal can be made. This appeal process is explained in ["Student Appeal of Instructor Evaluation" - Procedure 13.99.99.R0.05](#).

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty, see the following procedures:

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10](#)
[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)
[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

University Rules on Research

Students involved in conducting research and/or scholarly activities at Texas A&M University-Commerce must also adhere to standards set forth in [University Procedure 15.99.03.R1 Ethics in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Work](#).

AI use in the course

Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that can generate text or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the course instructor.

Any use of such software must be documented. Undocumented use constitutes academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow the use of such software entirely for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided, the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

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 an accommodation, please contact:

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

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
Email: StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu
Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web URL:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

East Texas A&M Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connections 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

School of Social Work & Council on Social Work Education-Specific Policies

Course Engagement

Final Evaluation and Grade Depends on both Classroom attendance and Participation:

Inadequate participation or lack of required time commitment in each class significantly affects students' grades. No matter the course venue, students must engage in a comparable amount of time. Expectations of both Face-to-Face classes and those with Online components include time spent reading and studying course material.

To earn a level of competency within a specific course, students must demonstrate both mastery of content and active engagement.

Mastery of content areas is evidenced by successful completion of course assignments such as written papers, group project deliverables, tests/quizzes, and other tangible products designed by instructors to evaluate knowledge and skills.

Additionally, the Social Work Profession is built upon human interactions and building human relationships – which is defined as engagement. Engagement is defined as meaningful involvement in interactions with the Instructor, peers, and outside stakeholders as appropriate (such as contacting a social worker to interview for a required assignment). Within the classroom setting, whether virtual or F2F, students must actively participate in 80% of engagement activities as outlined by individual instructors. These activities may include but are not limited to, participation in live, synchronous virtual classes, attending a Face-to-Face course when appropriate, interacting with peers in posted discussions, and collaborating in group interactive projects.

Students must meet standards for content mastery on tangible assignments and meet the threshold of active engagement of the time set during a semester by the Instructor.

Instructors are experts in each course content area and set the standards for students to meet to successfully complete the course.

Student Conduct

Students preparing to become professional social workers must adhere to the *University Code of Conduct*, *Department Code of Conduct* and the *National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics*.

Department Code of Conduct

The Academic and Professional Issues Committee (API) hearing is the formal path of due process for a student in regard to the concern being expressed. A student will be referred to the School of Social Work's API by faculty, field instructors, or faculty field liaisons when a concern arises regarding academic and student conduct and/or professional preparation. When "a student who fails to meet the professional expectation of the field for which he/she is preparing may be suspended from further

study in that program by the department administering that program” as demonstrated through ethical and/or legal violations; aberrant disregard for School of Social Work Code of Conduct or other concerns as determined by the [Academic and Professional Issues Committee](#).

Graduate Students have the right to appeal to the Graduate Dean according to [University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.39](#).

Undergraduate Students have the right to appeal to the Dean of the College of Education and Human Services according to [University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.41](#).

APPENDIX A
RUBRIC: Law Scavenger Hunt (100 pts.)

Criteria	Level 4 10 points	Level 3 8 points	Level 2 7 points	Level 1 6 points	Criterion Score
Criterion 1 Correct answers for each of 10 questions	Completely correct	Correct but minor omission	Correct section of the law but some aspect is incorrect or missing	Wrong section of the law	/100

APPENDIX B

RUBRIC: Interview (200 pts.)

Criteria	Level 4 50 /67.5 points	Level 3 40/60 points	Level 2 30/45 points	Level 1 20/37.5 points	Score
Criterion 1 Interviewee is active in legal field	Interviewee is active in legal field	Not acceptable	Not acceptable	Not acceptable	/50
Criterion 2 Information is about the person's official duties as it relates to rights of citizens, contact with victims, and other vulnerable populations	Interview is well-rounded and conveys the information requested	Interview is very good but lacks some minor details	Interview is acceptable but lacks major details	Interview is lacking major information	/75
Criterion 3 Professional Writing	Professionally written with no grammar errors	Minor mistakes but overall is professionally written	Professional writing needs improvement or proofreading	Lacks professionalism or major mistakes	/75

APPENDIX C
RUBRIC: Advocacy Video (100 pts.)

Criteria	Level 4 30 points	Level 3 24 points	Level 2 21 points	Level 1 18 points	Score
Criterion 1 Topic is a city, county, state, or federal law	Topic is a city, county, state, or federal law	Not acceptable	Not acceptable	Not acceptable	/30
Criterion 2 Discussion uses three scholarly or peer- reviewed references	Three references with no cue cards, etc.	Three references with cue cards, etc.	Two references	One reference	/30
Criterion 3 Conversation is professional and polite	Tone is professional and polite	Tone is polite but lacks some professionalism	Tone is on the verge of rudeness	Tone is rude or unprofessional	/30
Criterion 4 Appeal is convincing	Convincing appeal	Majority of appeal is convincing	Appeal is adequate	Appeal is not convincing	/10

COURSE OUTLINE/SCHEDULE

(Schedule subject to change to accommodate guest speaker schedules)

Date	Topic/Activities	Assignments
Week 1 6/2	Introduction to Social Work and the Law	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments
Week 2 6/9	Criminal Justice System	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments
Week 3 6/16	Social Work Laws : BHEC and State Board of Social Work Examiners	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments
Week 4 6/23	Administrative & Occupational Codes Privacy Act, HIPAA,	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments LAW SCAVENGER HUNT DUE
Week 5 6/30	Testifying and Legal Terms	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments
Week 6 7/7	Family Law & Social Work Danger Zones	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments
Week 7 7/14	Ethics & The Government	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments Interview Due
Week 8 7/21	Child Protective Services	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments
Week 9 7/28	Sex Crimes, Intimate Partner Violence, Human Trafficking	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments ADVOCACY VIDEO DUE
Week 10 8/4	Title VII, Title IV, Right appeal rulings of administrative bodies, general Civil Rights, Privacy Act, HIPAA and Affirmative Action (work and higher education)	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments