



SWK 514.01W: Social Work and the Law  
COURSE SYLLABUS: Summer 2026

**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@etamu.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&section=overview](https://tamuc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/account?vid=01TEXAM_COM:DEFAULT&section=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/allproducts/#::~:~: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.

### **Student Learning Outcomes** (Should be measurable; observable; use action verbs)

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.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

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**

This course will be delivered via synchronous and asynchronous sessions via D2L. It will consist of live class sessions, pre-recorded lectures, group engagement activities, and various assignments, including experiential learning and practical application of the content areas. In addition, small lectures, discussion activities, and workshops may provide instruction during this course

### **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.

<b>Assessments</b>	<b>Value</b>
<b>Law Scavenger Hunt</b>	100
<b>Interview</b>	200
<b>Advocacy Video</b>	100
<b>Total</b>	400pts.

## Assessments

**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**

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

### Course Outline/Calendar

Date	Topic/Activities	Assignments
<b>Week 1 06/01</b>	Introduction to Social Work and the Law	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments
<b>Week 2 06/07</b>	Criminal Justice System	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments
<b>Week 3 06/14</b>	Social Work Laws : BHEC and State Board of Social Work Examiners	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments
<b>Week 4 06/21</b>	Administrative & Occupational Codes Privacy Act, HIPAA,	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments <b>LAW SCAVENGER HUNT DUE</b>
<b>Week 5 06/28</b>	Testifying and Legal Terms	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments
<b>Week 6 07/05</b>	Family Law & Social Work Danger Zones	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments
<b>Week 7 07/12</b>	Ethics & The Government	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments <b>Interview Due</b>
<b>Week 8 07/19</b>	Child Protective Services	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments
<b>Week 9 07/26</b>	Sex Crimes, Intimate Partner Violence, Human Trafficking	See weekly D2L Content for Assignments <b>ADVOCACY VIDEO DUE</b>
<b>Week 10 08/02</b>	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

**School of Social Work &  
Council on Social Work Education-Specific Policies  
Course Engagement**

*Final Evaluation and Grade Depend 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 mastery of BOTH content and active engagement.

Mastery of content areas is evidenced by the 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 in each course is the 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 or interviewing for an internship). Within the classroom setting, whether virtual or Face-to-Face (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 F2F 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 each course.

**Class Attendance and Participation**

**Face-to-Face Classes**

Students are expected to attend classes scheduled to meet Face-to-Face, reflecting the responsibility inherent in developing as a social work professional. Roll calls will be taken regularly. Students are expected to be on time and prepared to participate when class begins, as well as be present throughout the entire class meeting. Classroom exercises, discussions, role plays, guest speakers, and other in-class experiential exercises are essential for a student's professional learning and continued development of self-awareness.

For classes that meet twice a week, students can be absent up to 5 times through the semester with no penalty. If **6 absences** occur, the overall grade will be **dropped 1 letter grade**. If **7 absences occur** (25% of the scheduled classes), the student will be **dropped 2 letter grades** or may result in failing the class.

**Online, Web-Enhanced Or Blended Classes**

Just as students are required to attend face-to-face classes, students are required to log in and participate in online components. To receive credit for attendance online via D2L, students must log in

and complete assignments in a timely manner. Not logging in to D2L to review the instructional material and completing assignments online during the appropriate time is the equivalent of an absence for each week this occurs.

Final evaluation and grades depend on both presence and participation. Students' grades will be significantly impacted by inadequate participation or lack of required time commitment each week established by each Instructor. Students are expected to spend a comparable amount of time in the online learning environment as they would in class (3 hours a week in the classroom). In addition, as in traditional F2F classrooms, students are expected to invest time in reading and studying class materials.

### **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](#)

**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 selection of the law	/100

**APPENDIX B RUBRIC:**

**Interview (200 pts.)**

Criteria	Level 4 50 /67.5 points	Level 3 40/60points	Level 2 30/45 points	Level 1 20/37.5 points	Score
Criterion 1	Interviewee is active in legal field	Not acceptable	Not acceptable	Not acceptable	/50
Criterion 2	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	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.)**

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

## 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](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](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@etamu.edu](mailto:helpdesk@etamu.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>

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR COURSE**

### **CWID and Password**

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@etamu.edu](mailto:helpdesk@etamu.edu).

### **Technology-Related Issues**

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 ETAMU campus open computer lab, etc.

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## **TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS AND SUPPORT**

### **Minimal Technical Skills Needed**

Students will need reliable computer and internet access for this course. Students must be able to effectively use myLeo email, myLeo Online D2L, and Microsoft Office.

### **Learning Management System (LMS) – D2L**

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 the technical requirements:

- View the [Learning Management System Requirements Webpage](#).
- Learn more on the [LMS Browser Support Webpage](#).

### **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 on the [Brightspace Support Webpage](#).

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## **COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT**

### **Interaction with Instructor Statement**

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your instructor. Correspondence will always be through university email (your “myLeo” mail) and announcements in myLeo online (D2L). You will not RECEIVE email through D2L, so be sure to check your ETAMU email for communication. Students are encouraged to check university email daily.

### **Include the Following in Emails with Instructor:**

- Course name and subject in the subject line
  - Salutation (Good afternoon, Dr. Jackson)
  - Proper email etiquette (no “text” emails – use proper grammar and punctuation)
  - Student name and CWID after the body of the email (possibly add to student signature on email)
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## **COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES**

### **Syllabus Change Policy**

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

### **Student Conduct**

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The [Code of Student Conduct](#) is described in detail online in the [Student Guidebook](#).

Students should also consult the [Rules of Netiquette Webpage](#) for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum.

### **ETAMU Attendance**

For more information about the attendance policy, please view the [Attendance Webpage](#) and the [Class Attendance Policy](#)

### **Academic Integrity**

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

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

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

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

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

### **Use of Artificial Intelligence**

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

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software 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

### **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**

East Texas A&M University

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

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

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: [studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu)

Website: [Office of Student Disability Services](#)

### **Nondiscrimination 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 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 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 ETAMU 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.

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.

### **East Texas A&M Supports Students' Mental Health – Counseling Services**

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](http://www.tamuc.edu/counsel)

**Mental Health and Well-Being**

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it.



As an Institutional Member of the National Association of Schools of Music, East Texas State A&M University supports the Association's commitment to student health and wellness. The following web address provides links to information for resources related to physical and mental well-being, as well as assists in offering preventative measures that students can take to avoid serious and/or chronic conditions: [Musician Health and Safety - East Texas A&M University](#)

**Department and Accrediting Agency Statement:**

**School of Social Work Mission Statement:**