

Trusts & Estates, Fall 2024
Prof. Gallanis

(The full course syllabus and reading list, plus other materials, will be available in Canvas.)

The assigned books for the course are:

Gallanis, Family Property Law: Cases and Materials on Wills, Trusts, and Estates, 9th ed. 2024, Foundation Press, ISBN 9798887864068.

Gallanis, Uniform Trust and Estate Statutes, 2024-2025 Edition, Foundation Press, ISBN 9798892090889.

Students should purchase physical books, not electronic versions, and should bring the physical books to each class session and to the final examination. The final examination will be “secure”: no electronic materials may be consulted, but students may consult materials in hard copy.

Policy on student use of electronic devices during class:

My experience teaching the Trusts & Estates course at Scalia Law causes me to be concerned about the effect of student use of electronic devices during class.

Empirical studies indicate that the use of electronic devices during a class session has negative effects, including increasing the level of distraction, reducing the comprehension of the material, and hurting the students’ eventual grades. The negative effects extend beyond the user; other students also are affected. These data are worrying, and they align with my experience as a professor.

Law school exams are typically not about rote memorization and regurgitation. Law school education succeeds when you make eye contact with the person speaking and put yourself in his or her shoes, working through the case law, statutes, and problems as if you were in the Socratic spotlight. This trains you, so that you can successfully confront unfamiliar fact-patterns. In any given hour, our minds will wander occasionally; this is natural. But I urge you to resist the lure of electronic devices. Do not be a “courtroom stenographer,” mindlessly capturing every syllable. Process the information you are hearing. Think more, and write less. I am noticing that the students with good grades in my courses do not use electronic devices in class.

I do not want to take the step of banning electronic devices. Instead, I am adopting the following policy this semester. I ask students voluntarily to refrain from using electronic devices during the Trusts & Estates class unless the student has an ADA accommodation or otherwise has a compelling need to use the device during class. I trust you to make this judgment yourself, but please keep in mind the empirical evidence that the use of electronic devices during class has negative effects on the learning of the user and other students.