



COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Number: 212-R01
Course Title: FAMILY LAW
Credit Hours: 3
Grading Mode: Letter Grade
Meeting Time(s): THUR 6:05 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Meeting Mode: Online
Exam Time(s): Dec 3, 6:00pm
Exam Mode: On Campus
Prerequisite(s): N/A
Corequisite(s): N/A

Instructor(s):
Jacob Alzamora

Contact Info:
jalzamora@gmu.edu

Please feel free to contact me via email at the address listed above. If you prefer to talk in person, please email me to arrange office hours. If anything is unclear at any point, please ask questions! During class, by email, before or after class, or in office hours – just ask!

Reading(s) & Supplement(s):
Elrod, Oldham, and Abrams, Family Law: Cases, Comments and Questions (West: 9th ed.)

Course Overview

This Course is intended to provide a legal understanding of how families are formed and dissolved in the United States. We will address marriage and the birth and adoption of children, through to parental rights in divorce, division of assets, spousal and child support, and many related topics along the way.

Course Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course:

1. Students will understand and be able to communicate, both orally and in writing, basic principles of U.S. Family Law

2. Students will be able to examine factual scenarios implicating one or more Family Law questions, to determine the precise legal questions raised, the possible legal outcomes, and the benefits and costs of each of these outcomes.
3. Students will understand the separation and interaction of governmental powers affecting the family, at both the federal and state levels, and how to read and understand Family Law statutes, cases and regulations.

Grading Policies

Exam conflicts:

In accordance with AR 4-4.1 (a) "Excuses and requests for permission not to sit for an examination when scheduled must be presented, with appropriate documentation, to the Law School's Associate Registrar. Except in emergencies, such requests should be presented no later than two weeks before the date of the examination. An exam may be delayed only in the circumstances listed in subsection (c). The Law School's Associate Registrar shall specify the date and time when a student with an excused absence may sit for the examination."

Classroom Policies

Attendance: Per AR 3-1.4, "maintenance of matriculation requires regular class preparation, participation and attendance, registration in the course of study required for the student's program (full-time or part-time), successive registration for each fall and spring term of each academic year until study is completed, and compliance with all other relevant requirements."

Absences: Per AR 4-1.1, "if a student is absent for any reason for more than 20 percent of the sessions of a course, the student is not eligible for credit in that course. A student who is not present for at least 75 percent of a session of the course is absent from that session."

Participation & Preparation:

The syllabus below will be posted on the law school's web site and on TWEN. I will call on several students randomly during each class. Academic Regulation 4.1 governs attendance. I will take attendance at each class. Should circumstances occur wherein you anticipate the possibility of missing a substantial number of class sessions (e.g., a serious illness), you should immediately contact the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Academic Support, Annamaria Nields.

Use of Technology & AI:

Students should not send or receive email or text messages or browse the Internet during class time.

Pursuant to Academic Regulation 4-2.2, "Unless expressly permitted in writing by an instructor, no portion of a class session or an examination may be preserved by means of a recording device (such as an audio recording device or a camera)." Any exceptions to this policy must be expressly permitted in writing by me. I will, however, be recording certain course sessions and making these available to students upon express direction from the Associate Dean for Administration and Student Affairs if necessary to accommodate a student for certain absences.

Use of Electronic Text Books During Exams

Students are permitted one laptop computer for exam taking purposes. Additional laptop computers or any other electronic data storage devices are not allowed in an exam room, unless permitted by the

course instructor's *written* exam instructions. Electronic text books (e-books) may be used during exams that are designated as open book by the instructor, and the instructor allows text books to be used during the exam and allows access to a student's computer files during the exam (open exam). E-books may not be used in exams where the instructor does not allow students to access their computer files during the exam (secure exam) even if the instructor permits access to text books. If the instructor has blocked access to the internet or computer files, you must bring a hard copy of the allowed text book(s) you wish to consult. Students will need to borrow or otherwise locate a hard copy of the e-book or print resources needed from the e-book to take into the exam room. The instructor determines the length of the examination and whether or not it is secure or open and what, if any, study materials are permitted during the exam. Students are responsible for adhering to the instructor's standards for all examinations, which are included in the examination materials.

Course Schedule & Assignments

Schedule is subject to change as we make our way through material. At the end of each class, I will announce any necessary adjustments to the schedule for the following week.

Reading marked “for lecture” is not mandatory but will help give context to the required reading and improve class discussion and participation. You are only responsible on the exam for aspects of this material covered in class.

Reading marked “for discussion” is mandatory and will be covered through cold calling and discussion. You are responsible on the exam for all this material.

Class 1: Aug 21

For Lecture

- Modern Family
 - 1-13
- Federal Law and Family
 - 21-37

For Discussion

- Family Definitions
 - 14-21
- Privacy, Violence, Parental Chastisement
 - 52-80
- Marriage Regulation
 - 102-144

Class 2: Aug 28

For Lecture

- Evidence and Torts
 - 180-193

For Discussion

- Marriage: Capacity, Consent, Procedures, Common Law, Putative Spouse
 - 144-172
- Property During Marriage and at Death
 - 193-213
- Marital Agreements
 - 221-224

Class 3: Sep 4

For Lecture

- Pre- and Post-Marital Agreements
 - 267-269; 275-288
- Cohabitants
 - 311-323

For Discussion

- Prenuptial Agreements

- 221-263 (stop at end of §7.04)
- Cohabitants
 - 289-311
- Contraception, Abortion, and Substantive Due Process
 - 80-100

Class 4: Sep 11

For Lecture

- Adjudicated Parentage
 - 468-484

For Discussion

- Abortion
 - 350-365
- Reproductive Technologies
 - 398-421
- Parentage
 - 423-455
- Parentage and Assisted Reproduction
 - 484-494

Class 5: Sep 18

For Discussion

- Surrogacy
 - 494-519
- Adoption, Consent, and Revocation
 - 521-547
- Open Adoption
 - 558-568
- Adoption “failures”
 - 573-575

Class 6: Sep 25

For Lecture

- Legal Representation of Children
 - 598-601

For Discussion

- Child, Parent, and State
 - 577-598
- Child abuse and neglect
 - 602-604; 607-629
- Termination of Parental Rights
 - 630-643
- Parents’ Rights re: Education and Medical Care
 - 657-670

Class 7: Oct 2

For Lecture

- Access to Divorce
 - 796-802

For Discussion

- Divorce and Divorce Alternatives
 - 753-767; 770-795
- Jurisdiction for Divorce and Support
 - 805-831

Oct 9 – No class – Fall Break

Class 8: Oct 16

For Lecture

- Hague Convention
 - 852-865

For Discussion

- Jurisdiction for Custody
 - 836-850
- Custody Determinations
 - 867-905

Class 9: Oct 23

For Discussion

- Joint Custody
 - 909-919
- Visitation
 - 923-928
- Non-parent Custody and Visitation
 - 929-953
- Modification
 - 953-965

Class 10: Oct 30

For Discussion

- Property Division – Classification and Distribution
 - 967-1042

Class 11: Nov 6

For Lecture

- Spousal Support – Overview and History
 - 1057-1060
- Spousal Support – Fault and Contract
 - 1075-1081

For Discussion

- Property Division – Distribution of Pensions
 - 1042-1055
- Spousal Support – State Approaches
 - 1060-1075
- Spousal Support – Duration, Value, and Guidelines
 - 1082-1103
- Spousal Support – Modification
 - 1108-1127

Class 12: Nov 13

For Lecture

- Child Support – Overview and History
 - 1129-1131
- Child Support – Geographic Differences
 - 1196-1200

For Discussion

- Child Support – Who Owes Support and How Much?
 - 1131-1195

Class 13: Nov 20

For Lecture

- Child Support – Enforcement
 - 1217-1228

For Discussion

- Child Support – Modification
 - 1200-1217
- Separation Agreements
 - 1229-1264

[Student Resources](#)

[Antonin Scalia Law School Academic Regulations](#)

[GMU Common Course Policies Addendum](#)

[Mason Square Services](#)

[Mason Square Police](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room 110

Emergency - Dial 911

Escort Services - 703-993-8070

Dispatch – 703-993-2810

[Student Support and Advocacy Center \(SSAC\)](#)

Mason Square Sexual Assault Services:

Van Metre Hall, Room 222D

703-993-8186

[Notice of Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Interpersonal Violence, and Stalking:](#)

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If a student wishes to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703 -380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703 -993-2380. Students may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703 -993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

[Mason Square Clinic](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room B102

703-991-2831

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Disability Services](#)

[Student Conduct](#)

[University Life](#)