

Law 335-001 | Child Welfare Law | Spring 2025 | 2 credits

Professor(s): May Shallal

Wed. 6:05 – 8:05 pm EST | **Final Exam:** Wednesday, May 7, 6:00 pm EST

Reading(s): You do not need to purchase a text for this class. Child welfare is statute based and our readings will mostly be from the Virginia Code and the Virginia Administrative Code. Any additional readings will be sent to you ahead of class.

Communication(s): mshalla@gmu.edu

Office Hours: If there are any questions or issues, you may reach me via email anytime. If there is an urgent need or question, I can be available by appointment for a virtual meeting.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will provide an in-depth examination of the child welfare system in Virginia. The focus will be on the legal frameworks and contemporary issues in child welfare. Students will gain practical skills in working with child welfare agencies, children and families in need. We will explore the juvenile justice system in Virginia and its impact on child welfare. We will also have guest speakers from the child welfare/juvenile justice system who will present real world perspectives on the issues unique to children and family services in Virginia.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Analyze and interpret key statutes and regulations related to child welfare;
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the child welfare system;
- Examine the legal processes involved in child abuse and neglect cases;
- Assess the impact of cultural, social and economic factors on child welfare cases;
- Understand the basics of juvenile justice and the laws affecting children and families and examine the intersection of child welfare with other areas of the law;
- Understand trends in Virginia child welfare law.

GRADING & PARTICIPATION

This class will be interactive. Class participation is welcomed and expected. Attendance is mandatory and will be checked at each class. It is the University's policy that if a student is absent for any reason for more than 20% of a course, the student will not be eligible for credit. But not to worry! We will hopefully have robust and lively discussions about what the best interests of the child(ren) are and how the law can best serve those interests. We will discuss case scenarios and court proceedings. Many of the cases presented will be based upon real life situations. We will have guest speakers to give some insights into child welfare law and practice and the juvenile courts in general.

The final exam is on Wednesday, May 7 at 6:00 p.m. EST, and it will include multiple choice and case analysis to determine the best interest of the child.

Grades will be awarded as follows:

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| • Attendance and participation | 20% |
| • Case Analyses | 40% |
| • Final Exam | 40% |

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COURSE SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS

Please note: This syllabus is a guide and may be subject to change, if needed.

Week 1-2 -Overview of child welfare -Key policies and legislation Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://www.masslegalservices.org/system/files/library/Brief%20Legislative%20History%20of%20Child%20Welfare%20System.pdf• https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/programs/child-welfarechild-labor/child-welfare-overview/
Week 3 -Examination of child abuse and neglect definitions and investigations Reading: VA code 16.1-228
Week 4 Discussion of CPS investigations and procedures; Case analysis – group Reading: to be distributed
Week 5-6 -Foster Care and Adoption -Permanency planning and adoption challenges Reading: VA Code 16.1-251; 252; 253; 278.2
Week 7-8 -Juvenile Justice in Virginia and its impact on Child Welfare Guest Speaker – Prosecutor/Public Defender Selected Statutes Virginia Code 16.1 (juvenile court) and 18.2 (criminal code)
Week 9-10 Case analysis project – work in class Reading: Case studies to be distributed prior to class
Week 11 Mock trial – take a case through from investigation through adjudication
Week 12 Guest speaker – Judge
Week 13 Exam review