

**Family Law
Spring 2026
Law 212 (001)
M/W 1:50-3:15**

Professor: Helen Alvaré
Office: 433G
e-mail: halvare@gmu.edu
Office Hours: Mondays after class, and by appointment

Required Text:

Elrod, Oldham, and Abrams, *Family Law: Cases, Comments and Questions* (West: 9th ed.)

Grading:

There will be a three-and-one-half-hour, closed book examination at the end of the semester. You will be responsible for the material covered during class discussions, as well as all of the readings, including those that are not discussed in class. Final grades may be raised or lowered by a single increment to reflect the quality of the class participation.

Assignments and Participation:

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. The Academic Regulations govern attendance. I will take attendance at each class.

Should circumstances occur (e.g., a serious illness) wherein you anticipate the possibility of missing a substantial number of class sessions, you should immediately contact the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Academic Support, Annamaria Nields.

Learning Outcomes:

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 both federal and state Family Law statutes, cases and regulations.

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.”

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

Class Recordings Prohibited: 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.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND SCHEDULE:

Please realize that this schedule is subject to slight changes as classes actually unfold. At the end of each class, I will confirm what material I intend to cover in the following class. Also, if weather interferes with an in-person class, the class will transition to an online format.

Assignments:

1-Wed Jan 14 – **Lecture****: 1-13; 21-37; and **Read**: Family Definitions 14-21; Privacy, Violence, Parental Chastisement 52-80.

(**“**Lecture**” means you are not required to read the material, but are encouraged of course to do so. You will be held responsible on the exam only for the material covered in the class presentation of lecture material. Feel free during class to raise questions about the material.)

Mon Jan – 19 MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY, SCHOOL CLOSED

2-Wed Jan 21(observe a Mon schedule) – **Read**: Marriage Regulation: 101-144

3-Mon Jan 26 – **Read**: Marriage: Capacity, Consent, Procedures, Common Law, Putative Spouse 144-172; and Marital Rights and Obligations: **Lecture** - Evidence and Torts: 180-93

4-Wed Jan 28 – **Read**: Property During Marriage and at Death 193-213: Marital Agreements 221-24

PROFESSOR IN ROME, CLASSES WILL OCCUR ONLINE OR AT RESCHEDULED TIME TO BE ANNOUNCED

5-Mon Feb 2 – **Read:** Prenuptial Agreements 221 -63 (STOP AT NOTE 12);
Lecture: 267-69 (stop before C); **Lecture:** Marital Agreements 275-288

6-Wed Feb 4 – **Read:** Cohabitants: 289-311; **Lecture** 311 at 2. – 323; **Read**
Contraception, Abortion and Substantive Due Process: 80-100

7-Mon Feb 9 – **Read:** Parenting: Abortion (cont'd): 350-365; Assisted Reproductive
Technologies 398-421

8-Wed Feb 11 – **Read:** Parentage determinations 423-55; 460-462; **Lecture:**
Paternity actions and paternity disestablishment 468 – 84; **Read:** Assisted
Reproductive Technology: 484-94

9-Mon Feb 16– **Read:** Parentage and Surrogacy 494- 519

10-Wed Feb 18 – **Read:** Adoption, Consent and Revocation: 521 – 547(stop before
B.); **Lecture** 547-58; **Read:** Open Adoption 558-68; 573-75(stop before Problem 9-
4)

11-Mon Feb 23 – **Read:** Child, Parent, and State: 577-98; Legal Rep of Children;
Lecture: 598-601; **Read:** Child Abuse Neglect 602-04 & Middle of 607 to 629

12-Wed Feb 25 – **Read:** Termination of Parental Rights: 630-43; Parents' Rights re:
Education and Medical Care 647- 70 (Professor will also briefly lecture on 2025
Mahmoud Scotus decision)

13-Mon March 2 – **Read:** Divorce 753-67; and 770(starting at 1.)-89

14-Wed March 4 - **Read:** Divorce Alternatives: 789-95; **Lecture** 796-802;
Read: Jurisdiction: 805-31 (Divorce and Support)

SPRING BREAK MARCH 9 - 15

15-Mon March 16 – **Read:** Jurisdiction Custody 836-50; **Lecture:** Hague Convention:
852-65

16-Wed March 18 – **Read:** Custody Determinations: 867-905

17-Mon March 23 – **Read:** Joint Custody: 909-919; Visitation 923-28

18 - Wed March 25 – **Read:** Non-Parent Custody and Visitation 929-953;
Modification: 953-65

19-Mon March 30 – Read: Property Division: 967-1000

20-Wed April 1 – Read: Property Division Appreciation and Transmutation: 1000-19; Distribution 1022(start at G.)-42

21-Mon April 6 – Read: Property Division - Pensions 1042-55; Spousal Support: **Lecture:** History; 1057-60; **Read:** State Approaches: 1060—75; **Lecture** - Fault 1075-81(stopping at D)

22-Wed April 8 - Read: Spousal Support: Duration and Value: 1082-1094; 1100 (starting at note 4) – 1103; 1108-27

23-Mon April 13 – Child Support: Lecture (History) 1129-31; **Read** 1131-1161

24-Wed April 15 - Read: How Much Child Support? 1162- 1195; **Lecture:** Geographic Differences: 1196-1200

25-Mon April 20- Read: Child Support Modification 1200-1217; **Lecture:** Enforcement 1217- 1228

26-Wed April 22– Read: Separation Agreements 1229-64