

Tompkins Cortland Community College
Master Course Syllabus

Course Discipline and Number: PARA 215
Course Title: Family Law/Domestic Relations

Year: 2021-2022
Credit Hours: 3

Attendance Policy: *To maintain good grades, regular attendance in class is necessary. Absence from class is considered a serious matter and absence never excuses a student from class work. It is the responsibility of all instructors to distribute reasonable attendance policies in writing during the first week of class. Students are required to comply with the attendance policy set by each of their instructors. Students are not penalized if they are unable to attend classes or participate in exams on particular days because of religious beliefs, in accordance with Chapter 161, Section 224-a of the Education Law of the State of New York. Students who plan to be absent from classroom activity for religious reasons should discuss the absence in advance with their instructors. See college catalog for more information.*

Services for Students with Disabilities: *It is the College's policy to provide, on an individual basis, appropriate academic adjustments for students with disabilities, which may affect their ability to fully participate in program or course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Coordinator of Access and Equity Services, to discuss their particular need for accommodations. All course materials are available in alternate formats upon request.*

Course Description

Designed for upper level paralegal majors, students acquire an understanding of the basic concepts, rules and principles, as well as some of the basic practical applications that form the foundation of family and domestic relations law. Topics include terminology, courts, matrimonial, divorce, property distribution, child custody and visitation, child and spousal support, child protection, adoption, paternity, domestic violence, juvenile delinquency, and other relevant topics. In particular, students become familiar with common pleadings and documents a paralegal may assist in preparing. They acquire an understanding of relevant laws, especially the New York Family Court Act and New York Domestic Relations Law. In addition, students develop their understanding of courts and procedures, and work to strengthen their research, writing, and drafting skills. Prerequisites: RDNG 116 if required by placement testing; ENGL 101; C or better grade in BUAD 201, PARA 101, and PARA 130. 3 Cr. (3 Lec.) Fall and spring semesters.

Course Context/Audience

This course is a required course for the Paralegal AAS Degree. It is generally taken in the third or fourth semester in the sequence of Paralegal classes, after completion of PARA 101 Introduction to Paralegalism, PARA 130 Legal Research and Drafting and BUAD 201 Business Law I.

This course teaches the theory and practice of family law deemed necessary for a paralegal in a law office or other law environment.

Further, this course may be of interest to anyone with an interest in family law including pre-law students, social services personnel, court clerks, county clerks, and the like.

Basic Skills/Entry Level Expectations

Writing: WC College level writing skills are required. See course co-requisites or pre-requisites.

Math: M0 Course requires very little or no math.

Reading: R4 Before taking this course, students must satisfactorily complete RDNG 116 or have assessment indicating that no reading course was required.

Course Goals

In reaching these objectives the student should develop ability to research a family law or domestic relations issue from start to finish, draft and file family law and matrimonial litigation documents, and become knowledgeable in all areas common to a family law practice. In addition, each student should develop an ability to recognize legal problems, distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information in legal problem situations, apply legal concepts and rules to unfamiliar as well as familiar situations, communicate legal concepts and procedures in written and practical form and critically analyze other legal information.

Course Objectives/Topics

Objective/Topic	% Course
Introduction to Family Law and Domestic Relations	8%
Marriage	8%
Separation	8%
Divorce Grounds	8%
Divorce Procedure	8%
Custody & Visitation	16%
Support	8%
Property Division	8%
Family Offenses	8%
Child Protection	8%
Adoption and Non-Martial Children	8%
Ethics	8%

General Education Goals - Critical Thinking & Social/Global Awareness

CRITICAL THINKING OUTCOMES	HOW DOES THE COURSE ADDRESS THE OUTCOMES (Include required or recommended instructional resources, strategies, learning activities, assignments, etc., that must or could be used to address the goal/outcomes)
<p>Students will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ develop meaningful questions to address problems or issues. ➤ gather, interpret, and evaluate relevant sources of information. ➤ reach informed conclusions and solutions. ➤ consider analytically the viewpoints of self and others. 	<p>Students will learn to critically read and digest legal information from various legal authority and secondary materials, and will develop understanding about issues regarding marriage, divorce, custody, support and other family law topics.</p> <p>Fourteen writing, drafting and research assignments, and four exams, each graded for form and content, each returned to the student with a great deal of written feedback in order for the student to learn from mistakes and to improve in subsequent submissions, and a family court observation.</p>
SOCIAL/GLOBAL AWARENESS OUTCOMES	HOW DOES THE COURSE ADDRESS THE OUTCOMES (Include required or recommended instructional resources, strategies, learning activities, assignments, etc., that must or could be used to address the goal/outcomes)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students will begin to understand how their lives are shaped by the complex world in which they live. ➤ Students will understand that their actions have social, economic and environmental consequences. 	<p>Students will become more aware of social issues by reviewing legal issues while conducting legal research throughout the semester, in particular those relating to who can marry, divorce, custody, visitation and other family law issues.</p> <p>Fourteen writing, drafting and research assignments, and four exams, each graded for form and content, each returned to the student with a great deal of written feedback in order for the student to learn from mistakes and to improve in subsequent submissions, and a family court observation.</p>
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Instructional Methods

Methods to teach this class include written lecture, reading assignments, which include reading materials in the class, from the text and from outside sources, and weekly assignments and periodic exams.

Assignments include those from the text, research memos, and drafting assignments.

Weekly discussions are conducted throughout the semester.

Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

Method	% Course Grade
Weekly assignments (typically best 11 of 14)	50%
Participation in module discussions, Current Events discussions, asking questions, and other Web interaction	10%
Four Exams (best three of four)	40%

Text(s)

NY Family Law for Legal Assistants, Schechter, 2nd Edition, © 2006 West Publications.
 NY Yellowbook -2010 Family Law, Matthew Bender, Latest Edition, © 2010

Bibliography

Pyle Family Law Delmar Press

Statsky, Wernet, CASE ANALYSIS and FUNDAMENTALS of LEGAL WRITING, West

Brand, White, LEGAL WRITING, The STRATEGY OF PERSUASION, St. Marin's Press

Block, EFFECTIVE LEGAL WRITING, Foundation Press

Charrow and Erhardt, CLEAR and EFFECTIVE LEGAL WRITING, Little and Brown

Other Learning Resources

<p>Audiovisual No resources specified</p>
<p>Electronic No resources specified</p>
<p>Other Internet, Westlaw and LEXIS</p>

