

Tompkins Cortland Community College
Master Course Syllabus

Course Discipline and Number: PARA 215

Year: 2023-2024

Course Title: Family and Domestic Relations Law

Credit Hours: 3

I. Course Description: This course is 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: ENGL 101; C or better grade in BUAD 201, PARA 101, and PARA 130. 3 Cr. (3 Lec.) Fall semesters.

II. Additional Course Information:

1. This course will be offered online only; students must have access to a reliable computer and internet.
2. This course is required for the Paralegal A.A.S. degree.
3. Students will have access to Westlaw & Lexis online legal research tool at no additional charge. Use of these resources is required.
4. Students will be graded on participation in online discussions as well as on submitted work.

III. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Research a family law issue from start to finish, demonstrating comprehension of family law statutes and cases.
2. Explain the basic procedures for filing and responding to family law actions.
3. Draft family law letters, pleadings, and other relevant documents, for both family court and matrimonial matters, using appropriate procedures and complying with required instructions with meticulous attention to detail, demonstrating competence in computer use, online research, and use of appropriate software.
4. 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.
5. Describe and apply both lawyer and paralegal ethics rules in a family law context.

IV. Tompkins Cortland Institutional Learning Outcomes; Program Learning Outcomes; SUNY General Education Outcomes

Tompkins Cortland ILOs **N/A**

Complete this section for “service” courses only (e.g. courses that are required of all students; courses that are not program specific but satisfy liberal arts requirements; or commonly used in multiple academic programs to meet non-

program-specific requirements). Check only Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) that are meaningfully developed and assessed in this course. For each ILO chosen, include the SLO to which it aligns.

Students will:

- ☐ Communicate effectively, in oral and written forms, taking into consideration audience and purpose.
- ☐ Apply principles and methods of scientific inquiry and quantitative reasoning appropriate to their discipline.
- ☐ Use information, critical thinking, and the creative process to solve problems and reach conclusions.
- ☐ Use technology appropriate to their discipline.
- ☐ Describe the ways in which social, economic, or environmental sustainability depends on their own and the collective contributions of a diversity of ideas and people.

Program Learning Outcomes

Complete this section for program-specific courses (e.g. those that share the same 4 letter designation as the academic program or satisfy requirements in related programs). List the academic program(s) here and note which Student Learning Outcomes align to specific Programmatic Learning Outcomes. Please see the MCS Instructions for more details.

Specify the Academic Program

Paralegal A.A.S.

PLO 1: Read and understand legal writing: met through reading course materials, and required primary and secondary source documents.

and

PLO 2: Research & Writing- Conduct legal research and prepare professional legal memos and documents: met through assignments.

and

PLO 3: Understanding the role of a paralegal in working independently and meticulously under the supervision of an attorney, within ethical boundaries: met through reading and lecture materials.

SLOs:

1. Research a family law issue from start to finish, demonstrating comprehension of family law statutes and cases.
2. Explain the basic procedures for filing and responding to family law actions.
3. Draft family law letters, pleadings, and other relevant documents, for both family court and matrimonial matters, using appropriate procedures and complying with required instructions with meticulous attention to detail, demonstrating competence in computer use, online research, and use of appropriate software.
4. 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.
5. Describe and apply both lawyer and paralegal ethics rules in a family law context.

PLO 4: Proficiency of technology, both in general and in proprietary legal technology: legal technology met through assignments requiring the use of Westlaw and Lexis; general technology is required to complete the asynchronous course and preparing legal documents using contemporary software.

SLOs:

1. Research a family law issue from start to finish, demonstrating comprehension of family law statutes and cases.
2. Explain the basic procedures for filing and responding to family law actions.

3. Draft family law letters, pleadings and other relevant documents, for both family court and matrimonial matters, using appropriate procedures and complying with required instructions with meticulous attention to detail, demonstrating competence in computer use, online research, and use of appropriate software.

SUNY General Education Outcomes N/A

If this course **assesses** a SUNY GEN ED Outcome, check all that apply and indicate which course outcome(s) address each checked item:

☐ CRITICAL THINKING - Students will:

- a. identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or others' work; and
- b. develop well-reasoned arguments.

☐ INFORMATION MANAGEMENT - Students will:

- a. perform the basic operations of personal computer use;
- b. understand and use basic research techniques; and
- c. locate, evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources.

☐ GENERAL EDUCATION CATEGORY - Area(s):

For courses that are approved to meet one (or more) of the ten SUNY General Education categories, indicate which category the course fulfills, and which outcome(s) are aligned with the SUNY outcomes for that category:

☐ This course does not address any of the above Tompkins Cortland ILOs, PLOs, or SUNY General Education Outcomes.

V. Essential Topics/Themes

1. Introduction to Family Law & Domestic Relations Law
2. Lawyer and non-lawyer ethical considerations
3. Marriage
4. Separation
5. Divorce Grounds
6. Divorce Procedure
7. Custody & Visitation
8. Child & Spousal Support
9. Property Division & Equitable Distribution
10. Family Offenses
11. Child Protection
12. Adoption, Non-Marital Children, Non-traditional Issues
13. Ethics Issues as Applied to Typical Legal Scenarios

VI. Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

Method	% Course Grade
1. Weekly assignments (typically best 11 of 14)	50% 40-65%
2. Four Exams (typically best 3 of 4)	30-40%
3. Discussion Participation/Attendance	5-10%
4. Optional Project(s): Individual or group projects as designed by the instructor	0-10%

VII. Texts – None

VIII. Bibliography of Supplemental Materials

1. Schechter, Sara P. <i>New York Family Law</i> , 3 rd Ed., Cengage Learning, 2012
2. Statsky, William P. <i>Family Law</i> , 6 th Ed., Cengage Learning, 2012
3. Luppino & Miller, <i>Family Law & Practice</i> , 5 th Edition, Pearson, 2020

Editions listed are current as of date of syllabus. More recent editions may be used.

IX. Other Learning Resources

Audiovisual: None specified

Electronic: Students will need access to a reliable computer with internet access

Other: Students will need to apply for access to Westlaw and Lexis as directed by course materials; there is no additional cost to the student for this.

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.*

Academic Integrity: *Every student at Tompkins Cortland Community College is expected to act in an academically honest fashion in all aspects of his or her academic work: in writing papers and reports, in taking examinations, in performing laboratory experiments and reporting the results, in clinical and cooperative learning experiences, and in attending to paperwork such as registration forms.*

Any written work submitted by a student must be his or her own. If the student uses the words or ideas of someone else, he or she must cite the source by such means as a footnote. Our guiding principle is that any honest evaluation of a student's performance must be based on that student's work. Any action taken by a student that would result in misrepresentation of someone else's work or actions as the student's own — such as cheating on a test, submitting for credit a paper written by another person, or forging an advisor's signature — is intellectually dishonest and deserving of censure.

Several degree programs offer student learning opportunities (such as internships, field work, and clinical experiences) outside the standard classroom setting. As part of the learning process, students must understand and engage in conduct that adheres to principles guiding employment within the professional workplace. These behaviors include, but are not limited to, academic integrity, accountability, reliability, respect, use of appropriate language and dress, civility, professional ethics, honesty, and trustworthiness. Disciplinary action may be initiated for inappropriate conduct occurring while participating in any course-related project or event.