

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

COURSE/UNIQUE NUMBER: 61085/SW 387R
60860/ SW 360K

SEMESTER: SPRING 2017

MEETS: TUESDAY 5:30-8:30PM, SSW 1.212

INSTRUCTORS: VALERIE RINGLAND, J.D. &
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OFFICE HOURS: BY APPOINTMENT

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SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM

I. Standardized Course Description

This course is intended to demystify the legal system. It will familiarize students with confidentiality, disclosure of records, social work privilege, informed consent, forensic interviewing, subpoenas, witness preparation and testifying. There will be an emphasis on the following areas of law which have a significant impact on social work practice: 1) family law; 2) domestic violence and sexual assault; 3) child maltreatment; 4) juvenile and criminal justice; 5) disability; 6) mental health and guardianship; and 7) rights of children and youth. The course will give students the opportunity to observe actual courtroom docket or state legislative session, read case law and statutes, write and review legal documents, and practice social work interaction with the legal system throughout the semester through a case study. It will also cover social worker liability such as civil rights violations, malpractice and sexual harassment. The course will also challenge students to understand and critically consider underlying assumptions and philosophies of our legal system.

II. Standardized Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will:

1. Understand the state and federal confidentiality laws and the legal procedures governing the disclosure of confidential information;
2. Demonstrate familiarity with testifying in legal proceedings, including lay and expert witnesses, direct examination, cross-examination and objections;
3. Understand the role of social workers and other experts in family law proceedings, including conducting home/social studies and court-ordered psychological evaluations;
4. Explain the process for obtaining a protective order in domestic violence cases and the legal effect of a protective order;
5. Identify different types of proceedings in child abuse cases, including emergency removals, status hearings, review and merit hearings, as well as demonstrate familiarity with child abuse reporting laws, the role of attorneys ad litem, guardians ad litem and CASA volunteers, and the testimony of social workers and therapists in such proceedings;
6. Understand what is meant by informed consent and how it affects social work practice;
7. Understand guardianship proceedings including court visitors, annual review of guardianships and removal of guardians and the impact of such proceedings on senior citizens and persons with disabilities;
8. Demonstrate familiarity with involuntary commitment proceedings, medication hearings, court-ordered out-patient and advanced directives;
9. Analyze the impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act on human service agencies, clients and social workers in private practice;
10. Analyze the impact of this knowledge on diversity and public policy issues and apply it to social work practice;
11. Explain underlying assumptions and philosophies of the legal system and be familiar with alternative approaches;
12. Connect this knowledge and these practices with ethical issues and the value base of social work practice.

III. Teaching Methods

This class uses a variety of teaching methods such as lectures, guest speakers, experiential activities, videos and group discussions in a circle format. Students need to complete assigned readings before class. This class requires student input and participation.

This course will utilize Canvas. It is the students' responsibility to ensure that the email address in Canvas is correct so that all communication from the instructor is received.

IV. Required Readings

Books

Harris Rome, S. (2013). *Social Work and the Law: Judicial Policy and Forensic Practice*. Boston: Pearson.
Ross, R. (1996). *Returning to the teachings: Exploring aboriginal justice*. Toronto, Canada: Penguin.

Additional materials

Additional materials will be assigned with at least one weeks' notice and will be available on Canvas.

V. Course Requirements

Social work, legal system and justice assignment	20
Case study assignments	51
Court observation OR legislative session visit	10
Testimony practice	9
Class participation	<u>10</u>
	100

GRADING SCALE

94.0 and Above	A
90.0 to 93.999	A-
87.0 to 89.999	B+
84.0 to 86.999	B
80.0 to 83.999	B-
77.0 to 79.999	C+
74.0 to 76.999	C
70.0 to 73.999	C-
67.0 to 69.999	D+
64.0 to 66.999	D
60.0 to 63.999	D-
Below 60.0	F

A = Superior work: The assignment exceeds expectations. Student does more than is required and demonstrates a high level of in-depth critical thinking and analysis (i.e., writing coherent, ideas synthesized, discussion well developed).

B = Good Work: The assignment meets all the requirements and demonstrates evidence of in-depth critical thinking and analysis.

C = Average Work: The assignment meets the requirements or has minor gaps but lacks evidence of in-depth critical thinking and analysis. Remember, a C- (73 points) or lower is noted as a course failure and will require re-taking the course.

D/F = Poor Work: The assignment has important gaps, both in terms of not meeting the requirements and lacking in-depth critical thinking and analysis.

Graduate students are expected to demonstrate a depth of knowledge and quality of work exceeding that of undergraduate students and will be graded accordingly.

1. Social work, legal system and justice assignment. The purpose of this assignment is to assess students' understanding of the course material at the end of the semester. Students will give a final presentation to the class in addition to turning in a physical copy of the assignment. Students may choose to write a research paper (20 pages not including cover page or references), or do a creative project utilizing visual art, video or other format. Students not writing a research paper will write a short paper in addition to their creative project (5 pages not including cover page or references) that contextualizes the project within the course material. All assignments are individual and not to be done in groups.
2. Case study assignments. Students will be assigned one of three possible case studies for the semester. After the first class, students will receive initial information about their case and can begin thinking through their investigation. Assignments include the following three tasks: (1) writing a case report to their case supervisor about the case, (2) writing social history for court, and (3) writing an affidavit for court. Additional information will be provided.
3. Court observation or legislature visit. Students are required to observe courtroom proceedings for at least one hour OR to attend at least one hour of an event during Social Work Advocacy Day at the Texas state capital on March 6, 2017. Students will then write a formal letter (2 pages) about their experience, including: where they were, what they observed, reactions, reflections and lingering questions. Additional information will be provided.
4. Testimony. Each student will be choose one of five cases in which they will play the role of a social work professional. Students will memorize relevant information and testify in a mock courtroom setting in the law school, where they will be direct and cross-examined by attorneys in front of a judge. Additional information will be provided.

5. Class participation. Students will receive up to ten points for class attendance, which includes class participation and professional conduct. Attendance will be taken every class period. A student may miss up to two classes. For each additional class missed, one point will be deducted from the class participation grade. Students who inappropriately use cell phones, computer, etc. during class will have one point deducted from their participation grade each time the behavior occurs. If all participation points are deducted from a student's class participation grade and continued absences and/or class disruptions occur, additional points will be deducted from the student's overall final grade.

VI. Class Policies

1. *Class attendance*. Attendance will be taken each class. It is the student's responsibility to sign the attendance sheet each class. Students are **allowed two absences**. Any material missed due to a class absence is the students' responsibility to obtain.
2. *Class participation*. Students need to **complete relevant readings before class** and should be prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning activities. Failure to demonstrate completion of readings is considered in assigning the class participation grade.
3. *General assignment requirements*. All assignments must be **typed, double spaced and have one inch margins** unless otherwise specified. References used in papers must be in **APA format** and should be academic sources when possible. Grading of written assignments will take into account the quality and content of the writing. Writing should be carefully proofread and errors (punctuation, typographical, spelling, etc.) corrected before submission to avoid losing points.
4. *Assignment due dates*. Students are expected to turn in assignments before the start of the class period they are due. Contact the instructor in emergency circumstances. **All written papers will be submitted online through Canvas. Questions to the instructor will be answered by email up to 24 hours before due date.**
5. *Use of technology in class*. No cell phones, ipods or other devices are to be used during class except during a break. **Computers may only be used for taking notes or for relevant in class activities**. Inappropriate use of computers will result in reduction of class participation points. Professional conduct means making a respectful and meaningful effort to participate in circle discussions and other lectures and activities.
6. *Student feedback*. Student feedback is encouraged during classroom circles or by appointment with the instructor. Formal student feedback will be requested anonymously halfway through the semester.
7. *Course modification*. The instructor may modify the course as needed and will give students at least one week's notice before any changes of the syllabus go into effect.
8. *Class procedures*. Students are expected to be ready to begin class at 5:30pm, and will have one ten-minute break during the middle of class. Students may bring tea/coffee materials and snacks to class and are responsible for cleaning messes.

V. University policies

1. *The University of Texas Honor Code*. The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.
2. *Professional Conduct and Civility in Class*. The professor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. Social Work also deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues. In this environment we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.
3. *Unanticipated distress*. Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the professor. The professor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/.

4. *Policy on social media and professional communication.* Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and other forms of electronic communication (i.e. blogs, etc.) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image.

Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including *any* information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in *any* way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

5. *Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty.* Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>).
6. *Use of class materials.* The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor may be a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of distributing those materials to other current or future students.
7. *Documented Disability Statement.* Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471- 6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). A student should present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed and followed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.
8. *Religious Holidays.* By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, examination, work assignment, or project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.
9. *Title IX Reporting.* In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct based on gender. Students who report incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, or sexual misconduct to faculty, instructors, and/or staff who supervise students, will be provided a list of University resources. If the incident is impacting the academic environment, a report will be provided to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may be found at <https://www.utexas.edu/student-affairs/policies/title-ix>.

10. *Classroom confidentiality.* Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.
11. *Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students.* Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible for keeping the university informed about a change of e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.
12. *Safety.* As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.
13. *Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL).* If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership between the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.
14. *Emergency Evacuation Policy.* Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:
 - a. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
 - b. If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
 - c. In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor’s instructions.
 - d. Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

VIII. Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignment(s)
1	1/17	Introduction Overview of legal systems	Syllabus	N/A
2	1/24	Forensic social work Doing forensic interviews Social worker liability	SKIM Rome Chs. 1, 2 & 4 READ Rome Chs. 3 & 5 READ HIPAA overview & files READ FERPA overview	REVIEW Case study information SIGN UP for court observation
3	1/31	Child maltreatment Navigating the CPS system	READ Rome Ch. 6 READ A Parent’s Guide to CPS SKIM Understanding Texas CPS (look at charts at the end)	BRING Case Study Assignment #1 questions
4	2/7	Child welfare panel Understanding case law Mental health & guardianship	READ In the Interest of IVB READ MD v Abbot pp. 1-21 (up to D), 242-245 (V to A), 254-255 (VI) READ Rome Ch. 15	DUE Case Study Assignment #1 BRING Questions for panelists
5	2/14	Rights of children & youth Restorative school discipline International treaty work	READ Rome Ch. 20 READ UN Rights of the Child	REVIEW Case study information

Week	Date	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignment(s)
			READ Representation of Children pp. 1-5, 62-64 (Texas) SKIM Adolescent health guide	
6	2/21	Criminal justice system Juvenile justice system Corrections Justice system panel	READ Rome Chs. 11 & 12 READ TDCJ Victim Services WATCH VOM video	BRING Case Study Assignment #2 questions BRING questions for panelists
7	2/28	Family law Understanding statutes Mid-term course evaluation	READ Rome Chs. 7-8 READ Adoption Family Code Subchs. A, D & F	DUE Case Study Assignment #2 BRING Triggering concerns about sexual assault and family violence
8	3/7	Family & sexual violence Victim case study	READ Rome Ch. 9 READ Is it sex or assault? WATCH Vlogs	DUE Court observation or legislature formal letter
9	3/14	SPRING BREAK		
10	3/21	Comparative justice philosophy	READ Ross Intro - Ch. 6	REVIEW Case study information REVIEW Testimony case
11	3/28	Comparative justice philosophy	READ Ross Ch. 7 - Appendix	BRING Case Study Assignment #3 questions
12	4/4	Race, gender, disability & sexuality law	READ Rome Chs. 16 – 18 READ A Guide to Disability Rights Laws SKIM Roe v. Wade	DUE Case Study Assignment #3 BRING Testimony questions
13	4/11	Testimony		DUE Testimony in law school
14	4/18	Immigration law	READ Rome Ch. 19 READ What every social worker should know	SIGN UP for presentation slot
15	4/25	Presentations		
16	5/2	Presentations Course evaluations		DUE Social work, legal system and justice assignment