Family Law Policy Seminar
Professor DiFonzo
Professor Meller
Professor Schepard
Fall 2014
Syllabus and Schedule of Meetings

Two credits.
Writing Credit I or II available by arrangement with instructor.
Instructor’s permission is required for enrollment.
Enrollment limited

Overview

This is an interdisciplinary seminar that works on projects to develop good public policy for families involved with the legal system. The areas of law reform addressed in the Seminar vary from year to year as do the projects that the students work on.

Students work collaboratively with each other and with faculty to develop and evaluate specific proposals. This year, as described below, law and psychology students will also work collaboratively.

The overall focus of the research effort this semester is the creation of an interdisciplinary resource center for separating and divorcing families. The research and other assignments conducted by the students will ultimately create an operations manual for the center. Students will make oral presentations and prepare memoranda analyzing and supporting a law reform proposal as part of a team.

As will be discussed at the first meeting, the proposed center will provide multidisciplinary services to parents and children including mediation, agreement drafting, assessment, therapy and education. A similar center exists at the University of Denver whose experience we will grow and build on. For background on the DU Center see http://www.du.edu/rcsdf/index.html

Learning Objectives

The following are the learning goals of this Seminar. Bracketed citations are to the School’s Learning Outcomes for Graduating Law Students.

By the end of the Seminar students should have demonstrated at a proficiency level required for effectiveness as an entry-level lawyer the ability to:

• write analytically and persuasively [4(a)]
• present analysis orally outside of litigation [5(h), 6(m)]
• use policy to analyze and persuade [5(i)]
• engage in strategic planning and developing a plan to accomplish a goal [6(a)]
• utilize expert knowledge [6(i)]
• work collaboratively [6(j)]
• present written and oral communication in a manner that meets the standards of the legal profession [7(a)].

Grades for the Seminar will be based on total performance in all aspects of the Seminar's work

Assignment Areas

Students will be assigned to a group to research an area important to the creation of the resource center. Some of the groups will include law students and psychology students while others will consist of students from a single discipline.

We will discuss each topic in depth at the first meeting, and make assignments then. Each group will receive a detailed statement of the scope of its topic shortly after the first meeting.

We will ask students for topic preferences at the first meeting. We will also ask for second and third choices. We cannot guarantee each student will be assigned to a topic of choice, but will try hard to do so.

In brief, topics will include:

• **Topic #1- Legal information and legal advice-** since the center will not be representing clients in the traditional sense (it will provide mediation services and drafting services to both parents) what can it tell clients about governing law? Can it draft agreements for clients? – two law students.

• **Topic # 2- How can we best integrate technology into the operations of the center?**- What technology and computer programs does the center need? How do we keep client information secured? – one law and one psychology student.

• **Topic # 3- Children’s participation in center services:** should mediation include children, what kind of therapy for children should the center provide? What consent is required before the center what consents that children can give and that the center needs to get? – one law and one psychology student.

• **Topic # 4- Reporting and ethical standards of the lawyers and psychologists:** what each can do, reconcile differences in standards of ethics and practices,
particularly in reporting child abuse and neglect and domestic violence.- one law and one psychology student.

- **Topic # 5- Creating and terminating client relationships**: What kind of consent must the Center get to begin working with a family? With the children? For research and evaluation? When can the Center end the relationship with a client?- one law and one psychology student.

- **Topic # 6- Domestic violence**: how does the center screen for domestic violence? How should center services be altered if domestic violence is present? What resources are available in the New York and nationally for screening and mediation with a history of domestic violence? Which ones should the center use?- one law and one psychology student.

- **Topic # 7- Evaluation of center services**: How shall we evaluate whether the center is improving the lives of parents and children? The education of students? – one psychology student to work the DU Center evaluators.

**Course Requirements**

Law students are required to:

- **Make a preliminary power point presentation on their assigned topic early in the semester.** The preliminary power point presentation should be approximately 15 minutes long and cover the following:
  - summarize the scope of the topic;
  - describe any thesis and tentative conclusions reached;
  - describe research done to date;
  - identify any difficulties the students are having in conducting the research and a plan for solving them;
  - describe any help wanted from faculty and students in the Seminar.

- **Make a longer power point presentation as the semester progresses.** The longer power point presentation is an expanded version of the preliminary presentation that should address the questions and comments made at the preliminary presentation. Time estimate for the longer presentation is 30 minutes that includes time for comments from faculty and students.

- **Prepare and lead a class on the assigned topic for the Seminar.** The class session should aim to teach the other students about the area that the student team been assigned to research. The class should be 50 minutes long.

Students will be required to submit a lesson plan for their class to the faculty in advance of the class for approval. The lesson plan should identify the learning objectives for the class and the methodology that the students will
use to achieve those objectives. Students will be required to send out an assigned reading to their classmates, prior to the class date that they will lead, with questions/areas to consider or discuss. The class should include a presentation or other interactive activity in which the other students can participate.

• *Write a paper based on their assigned topic.* Students are required to submit a draft of their research paper, have a conference with the faculty to discuss the draft and revise it.

More detail will be provided on each requirement on the first day.

**Summary of Due Dates**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Preliminary Power Point Presentation</th>
<th>Longer Power Point Presentation</th>
<th>Class Plan Due</th>
<th>Student Led Class</th>
<th>First Draft of Paper Due</th>
<th>Conference on Paper</th>
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<td>#1</td>
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Final papers for all groups due on 12/2/2014 (Thursday class schedule)

Notes:
• Copies of all power point presentation slides, lesson plans and drafts of papers should be send simultaneously to Professors DiFonzo, Schepard and Meller via e mail.

Detailed Schedule of Meetings

Tuesday, August 26th

Course organization and assignments. Groups assigned and interview assignment handed out. Psychology students will join. Professors will discuss collaboration techniques. Students will be required to develop a schedule with their partner for the semester based on each student's availability.

Tuesday, September 2nd

Faculty presentation on need for center and its development and organization.

Tuesday, September 9th

Preliminary power point presentation – Topics #1, #2 and #3.

Tuesday, September 16th

Preliminary power point presentation – Topics #4, #5, #6 and #7

Tuesday, September 23rd

No meeting.

Tuesday, September 30th

Longer power point presentations – Topics #1, #2 and #3

Tuesday, October 7th

Longer power point presentations – Topics #4, #5, #6 and #7

Class outlines due for classes on October 17th – topics #1, #2 and #3

Tuesday, October 14th

No meeting

Friday, October 17th
Student led classes on Topics #1, #2 and #3

**Tuesday, October 21st**

No class

Class outlines due for classes on October 31st - topics #4, #5, #6 and #7.

**Friday, October 31st**

Student led classes on Topics #4, #5, #6 and #7

*First Draft of papers due on Topics #1, #2 and #3*

**Week beginning Monday, November 3rd**

Conferences with Groups #1, #2, and #3 – dates and times to be scheduled

**Friday, November 7th**

*First drafts of papers due for Groups #4, #5, #6 and #7*

**Week beginning Monday, November 18th**

Conferences with Groups #4, #5, #6 and #7 – dates and times to be scheduled.

**Tuesday, November 25th**

Final class meeting

**Tuesday, December 2nd (No Class-Thursday class schedule)**

Final Papers Due