Legal Interviewing, Counseling and Negotiation: Law 2906
Professors Silberfeld, Karabatos, Sethi, and Fernandez
Spring 2016

SYLLABUS

1. **What This Course Covers:** This course covers four specific skills in the following sequence: (1) client interviewing; (2) witness interviewing; (3) client counseling; and (4) negotiation. The course necessarily includes other skills such as fact gathering and analysis, strategic thinking, and lawyering within the law of ethics and within your own moral framework.

2. **Textbooks:** The textbooks for the course, available for purchase at the Hofstra University bookstore unless otherwise noted, are:

   2. Fisher, Ury and Patton, *Getting to Yes* (2d edition); and

3. **Reading Assignments:** They tend to be bunched (see the Calendar at the end of this Syllabus), with heavy reading early in the semester and when a skill is introduced and light or no reading during the weeks of video recorded simulations and at the end of the semester. Please plan your time accordingly. You cannot do a good job learning the skills unless you read the material in a contemplative way.

   The reading assignments for each week should be completed before the Tuesday class (see below). In addition, the students may be contacted by e-mail prior to the Tuesday class with additional assignments or topics and questions for discussion.

4. **What You Will Do In The Course:** On Tuesdays, all students will meet with Professor Silberfeld in a one hour class in room 242 for lectures, demonstrations, drills, and discussion. On Thursdays, the students will meet for two hours in small groups called subsections (rooms to be announced). There will be four subsections, each consisting of no more than eight students; the subsection instructors are Professors Silberfeld, Karabatos, Sethi, and Fernandez. You will receive your subsection assignments prior to the first subsection meeting on January 21.

   In some weeks, the subsection will take the form of a workshop in which you interview, counsel, or negotiate for a few minutes and receive immediate feedback. In other weeks, your subsection professor will meet with you individually or in pairs to critique your video recorded simulations, which are explained below.
For some workshops and video recorded assignments, students will be divided into Group A and Group B. You will receive your group assignments prior to the first workshop.

Outside of class, you will counsel a client and negotiate twice with adversaries (role played by other students in the course). One of the negotiations will be in a dispute setting. The other will be transactional (e.g., negotiating a contract). Subsections will not meet during the weeks that you counsel and negotiate outside of class.

The out-of-class counseling and negotiation sessions will be video recorded. You will then meet individually or in pairs with your subsection professor to critique your performance, but not to review the whole recording together from beginning to end. Instead, you will watch the video privately beforehand and choose several passages that you would like to talk about. You might have questions about what was going on, or you might want suggestions on solving problems, or you might want to talk about something you think went particularly well or badly. The subsection professor will also watch the video and similarly choose a small number of passages. At the critique, you and the subsection professor will talk about the passages thus identified and possibly even view one or more of the passages in question. This procedure makes the critique more focused and allows the student to set much of the agenda for the critique.

In addition to discussing or viewing selected passages from the video at your conference, your subsection professor will also provide you with a general assessment of your performance.

The procedures for recording the counseling and negotiation sessions and viewing the recordings in advance of your conferences will be explained in class.

Four of the Tuesday classes are presently scheduled as “Group Critiques.” At the Group Critique, we will discuss the video recorded assignments after they have been completed but before the individual conferences. For example, Counseling Assignment A will be video recorded during the week of February 8; the Group Critique to discuss Counseling Assignment A will take place on Tuesday February 23; and the individual conferences relating to Counseling Assignment A will take place on Thursday February 25. The discussions at the Group Critique will focus on research, preparation, and strategy, what worked and what didn’t. The professor may show excerpts from one or more student videos. In addition, the professor may ask students to reenact a portion of the assignment.

You will also keep a journal and write two short memos and one longer one (explained below).

5. Journals: These instructions apply to the counseling exercise when you act as the attorney and to the transactional and dispute negotiation exercises. Different instructions apply to the counseling exercise when you act as the client (see below).
After each video recorded counseling and negotiation session but before you review the video, you are required to write a journal entry evaluating your performance. Do this no later than the evening of the same day you are recorded. If you wait until the next day, much of your thinking will be lost overnight. In addition, after you watch each video session but before you meet with your subsection professor, you are required to write another journal entry evaluating your performance, but this time as seen on the video.

You must e-mail both journal entries to your subsection professor no later than 11:59 pm on the Sunday after you have finished the video assignment. For example, the students who role play the lawyers in Counseling Assignment A must e-mail both journal entries to their subsection professor no later than 11:59 pm on Sunday February 14. You will be notified later in the semester of the exact due dates for each journal.

In preparing your journal entries and evaluating your work, some of the questions worth considering are:

In what instances and areas were you most effective?

In what instances were you less or least effective?

What can you do to improve in the areas or instances where you were less or least effective?

How and why did your opinion of your performance change after viewing the video?

What else have you learned about yourself from this performance?

Remember, your journal entries should evaluate your performance, not simply describe what happened.

Journal entries can be of whatever length you think appropriate. Quality is more important than quantity. Only your subsection professor will see your journal entries. The contents of your journals will not be disclosed to other students. The professor may choose topics for discussion at your individual conferences based on your journal entries.

The following instructions apply when you act as the client in the counseling exercise: you are required to submit one journal entry discussing what you learned about counseling in your role as the client. This journal entry must be e-mailed to your subsection professor no later than 11:59 pm on the Sunday after you have finished the video assignment. For example, the students who role play the clients in Counseling Assignment A must e-mail their client journal entry to their subsection professor no later than 11:59 pm on Sunday February 14. Remember, the purpose of this entry is not to critique the student who roleplayed the attorney but to discuss what you learned about counseling as a result of roleplaying the client.
6. Memos: You will write two short memos and one longer one. Before each of the two video recorded negotiation sessions, you will write a short memo (three to five pages) explaining your negotiation strategy. And before your video recorded counseling session, you will write a longer memo (five to ten pages) explaining your counseling plan. To prepare these memos, you may do whatever legal and factual research you believe may be necessary or helpful.

7. Lap Tops: Lap tops will be permitted in the Tuesday class. However, students may not use their lap tops in the Thursday workshops. The students in the workshops are expected to listen carefully and provide feedback to the students who are performing the simulated exercises. Experience has taught us that lap tops are a distraction in that context. If you feel you will need to rely on notes when you are performing a simulation in the workshop, please print them out or write them out in longhand and bring a hard copy to class.

8. How Final Grades Will Be Computed: Each part of the course is worth up to a certain number of points, as follows:

15 points — performances in workshops
25 points — counseling session and memo
25 points — transactional negotiation and memo
25 points — dispute negotiation and memo
10 points — journal

The total number of points available is 100. At the end of the semester, we will total up each student's points and assign a letter grade to each student, conforming the grades to any applicable course curve.

The professors will grade your performance in the workshops and on the video exercises by assigning you one of three grades. You will receive the highest grade (Impressive) if your work stands out from the work of the class as a whole. Most of the students in each subsection will receive the middle grade (Sufficient). You will receive the lowest grade (Cause for Concern) if you perform below the level of the other students and may have significant problems to overcome. The professors have the option for those students in the middle category to add a plus (+) or minus (-). In assessing your performance on the video exercises, the professors may also consider the contents of your counseling and negotiation memos, and whether those memos were handed in on time. For purposes of determining your final grade in the course, each grade on each assignment is worth a certain number of points. E.g., for the video exercises, an “I” is worth 25 points; an “S+” is worth 20; an “S” is worth 16; an “S-” is worth 12; and a “CC” is worth 7.

All of your work in the workshops and on the video exercises will be graded by your subsection professor. Your grades will be based upon a subjective assessment by your professor.
of the skills you demonstrate. Prior to each graded assignment you will be advised of the factors the professors will consider in determining your grade. With regard to the video recorded negotiation exercises, in determining your grade your professor will consider not only the skills you demonstrate but also the result you achieve for your client.

If you hand in your journal entries on time, you will automatically receive seven points. Points will be added if your entries show careful thought and analysis.

There is no final exam.

9. Class Attendance: You are on the verge of becoming a professional and are expected to act like a member of a profession. For very good reasons, your work and conduct are judged according to professional standards, which are much more demanding than the standards you experienced in college. When a law school teacher looks at you, the teacher sees not just you but also the thousands of future clients who will depend on you. The teacher, the law school, and you are primarily responsible to those clients. That is why in law school attending class, being prepared, and actively participating in class discussions are not optional.

These considerations aside, the rules of the New York State Court of Appeals, the American Bar Association, and the Law School all require law students to be in good and regular attendance in all law school courses for which they are registered. To comply with these rules, you must attend at least 85% of your regularly-scheduled classes. Thus, you may miss no more than 15% of your classes.

This rule applies separately to the Tuesday lectures and the Thursday workshops, as follows: there are 16 hours of class on Tuesdays (this includes the two hour class on Thursday January 14); you may miss no more than 2 hours of these classes. Regarding the five two hour Thursday workshops, you may miss no more than 1 hour of these classes. However, since you will be graded on your participation in the workshops, and as a general rule the work cannot be made up, I strongly advise you not to miss any workshop time at all. On the remaining Thursdays, you will either video record a simulation or meet individually or in pairs with your subsection professor. You must attend the recording sessions and conferences.

If possible, if you are going to miss a Tuesday class or a Thursday workshop, please notify Professor Silberfeld or your subsection professor in advance.

I will circulate a sign-in sheet at the beginning of each regularly-scheduled Tuesday class, which shall be dispositive evidence regarding class attendance. Each student is responsible for signing in. Falsification of sign-in sheets is a violation of the Code of Academic Conduct.

Attendance sheets will not be circulated at the Thursday subsection meetings because it will be obvious when someone is absent.

If you exceed the permitted number of absences, your final grade could be adversely affected and you could be administratively withdrawn from the course. Any such withdrawal...
may have serious ramifications for your financial aid, academic standing, and date of graduation. If you are excessively absent from several classes, you may face additional sanctions, including but not limited to denial of certification of good and regular attendance to the New York State Board of Law Examiners, or other state bar examiners.

If you believe you will be absent from class for more than the permitted number of hours, you should speak with Professor Silberfeld and your subsection professor as soon as possible. Accommodations may be made for students who must be absent for religious reasons, for medical reasons typically supported by a physician’s note, or in cases of truly compelling hardship or other extenuating circumstances.

Lastly, late arrivals are disruptive to the class. For this and other reasons, please make every effort to arrive for class on time.

11. Attendance at Out-of-Class Events: The course calendar, set forth below, includes four out-of-class events for each student: one counseling session where the student plays the role of the attorney; a second counseling session where the student plays the role of the client; and two negotiation sessions where the student plays the role of the attorney negotiating against another student playing the role of adversary attorney.

At each of these events, other people will carve out time on their schedules and be at a certain place assuming that you also will be there. Because other people depend on it, a good professional scrupulously honors time commitments.

The course calendar also includes four dates where the students meet individually or in pairs with their subsection professors to critique their performances on the video recorded simulations.

Schedules for the video recorded assignments and the critiques will be distributed well in advance. If you are not available at a time scheduled for you, tell Professor Silberfeld immediately and accommodations will be made. The scheduled time must be impossible for you, not merely inconvenient, in order to justify a change. The sooner you contact Professor Silberfeld with a scheduling conflict the better. As the date of the event in question gets closer, rescheduling becomes extremely difficult, as other people are involved in each event. If you do not appear at one of the scheduled events and have not supplied an acceptable explanation in advance, the grade for that aspect of the course will be reduced significantly.

12. How to Contact Professors Silberfeld, Karabatos, Sethi, and Fernandez: Professor Silberfeld’s office is in room 103C and his mailbox is in room 216. His e-mail address is lawjzs@hofstra.edu. The LICN secretary is Betty Black. She is also in room 216. Her e-mail address is Betty.J.Black@hofstra.edu. Her phone number is 463-5928. The best way to reach Professor Silberfeld is via his e-mail address.
Professor Karabatos is a senior partner at a law firm in Garden City. Her e-mail address is ekarabatos@soklaw.com. Her office phone number is 516-877-8000.

Professor Sethi practices labor and employment law in New York City. Her e-mail address is rita.sethi@gmail.com. Her phone number is 516-776-8209.

Professor Fernandez is a Deputy Nassau County Attorney. His e-mail address is pablofesq@gmail.com. His phone number is 516-776-8731.

Please telephone Professors Karabatos, Sethi, or Fernandez only if truly necessary. Practicing lawyers tend to have tightly scheduled work days.

Professor Silberfeld has no set office hours, but I have a flexible schedule and am available to meet with students on most days between 10 am and 5 pm. Contact me via e-mail to make an appointment.
CALENDAR

Note: The following calendar is subject to change depending upon the needs of the course as the semester progresses.

Week 1: Week of January 11:

Tues. Jan. 12: Reading Assignment:
Course Syllabus
Essential Lawyering Skills (“ELS”) Ch. 1-6: Becoming a Lawyer

Class: Introduction/Course Description
Topic for Discussion: What do you think are the three most important, insightful, or helpful observations in ELS Chapters 1-6 about lawyers or the practice of law?

Thur. Jan. 14: NO SUBSECTION MEETINGS THIS WEEK
Entire class will meet together in room 242 from 4:10 to 6:00 pm

Reading Assignment:
Ch. 7-8: Interviewing the Client
Selected provisions of the New York Rules of Professional Conduct (see below)

Class: Client Interview
Topic for Discussion: Choose any NY Rule of Professional Conduct and explain why you think it is particularly relevant to the initial client interview

Week 2: Week of January 18:

Tues. Jan. 19: Client Interview (continued)

Thur. Jan 21: Subsection meetings:
First client interviewing workshop: Exercise 1

Week 3: Week of January 25:

Tues. Jan. 26: Reading Assignment: ESL Chapter 9: Interviewing Witnesses

Class: Witness Interview

Thur. Jan. 28: Subsection meetings:
Second client interviewing workshop: Exercise 2A and 2B
Week 4: Week of February 1:

Tues. Feb. 2: Reading Assignment: ELS Chapters 18-22: Counseling
Class: Counseling the Client

Thur. Feb. 4: Subsection Meetings
Witness interviewing workshop

Week 5: Week of February 8:

Tues. Feb. 9: Class: Counseling the Client (continued)

Thur. Feb. 11: NO SUBSECTION MEETINGS THIS WEEK
Counseling Assignment A video recorded.
Students who counseled in Assignment A watch the recording to prepare for individual conferences during week 7.

Week 6: Week of February 15:

Tues. Feb. 16: NO CLASS: MONDAY SCHEDULE

Thur. Feb. 18: NO SUBSECTION MEETINGS THIS WEEK
Counseling Assignment B video recorded.
Students who counseled in Assignment B watch the recording to prepare for individual conferences during week 8.
Week 7: Week of February 22:

Tues. Feb. 23: Class: Group Critique Counseling Assignment A

Thur. Feb. 25: No subsection meetings: individual student conferences
Counseling Assignment A videos critiqued
(For “A” students only)

Note: The first negotiation class is Tuesday March 8. Since this is a light week, I suggest you begin reading the chapters in ELS on negotiation (chapters 23-28) that are due on 3/8; you may also want to begin reading Getting to Yes (“GTY”), which should be completed by Tuesday March 15.

Week 8: Week of February 29:

Tues. March 1: Class: Group Critique Counseling Assignment B

Thur. March 3: No subsection meetings: individual student conferences
Counseling Assignment B videos critiqued
(For “B” students only)

Week 9: Week of March 7:

Tues. March 8: Reading Assignment: ESL Chapters 23-28: Negotiation
Class: Introduction to Negotiation

Thur. March 10: Subsection meetings: First negotiation workshop

Week 10: Week of March 14:

Tues. March 15: Reading Assignment: GTY
Class: Negotiation (continued)

Thur. March 17: Subsection meetings: Second negotiation workshop
Week 11: Week of March 21:

Tues. March 22: Class: Negotiation (continued)

Thur. March 24: NO SUBSECTION MEETINGS THIS WEEK

Transactional negotiation video recorded. Students watch recording to prepare for critiques during week 13.

Week 12: Week of March 28: NO CLASSES: SPRING BREAK

Week 13: Week of April 4

Tues. April 5: Class: Group Critique Transactional Negotiation

Thur. April 7: No subsection meetings: student conferences Transactional negotiation videos critiqued.

Week 14: Week of April 11:

Tues. April 12: Class: Negotiation (continued)

Thur. April 14: NO SUBSECTION MEETINGS THIS WEEK

Dispute negotiations video recorded. Students watch recording to prepare for critiques during week 15.

Week 15: Week of April 18:

Tues. April 19: Class: Group Critique Dispute Negotiation

Thur. April 21: No subsection meetings: student conferences Dispute negotiation videos critiqued.

Week 16: Week of April 25:

Tues. April 26: TBA