Course Syllabus
Domestic Violence Law-WRC
University of Houston Law Center
Fall 2015

Profs. Janet Heppard and Barbara Stalder

Course Description:

Students will work individually and in small groups as they learn about the State laws, Federal Laws, and case law related to issues surrounding Domestic Violence. The topics may include domestic violence in the family code, criminal laws dealing with family violence, employment laws relating to family violence, and immigration and domestic violence. Writing assignments may include short articles, letters (e.g., demand, opposing counsel, client, court), pleadings, motions, and one longer paper on a chosen topic related to domestic violence. Each student will complete three to five practical writing assignments, with total production of at least twenty-one pages, based on an average of 250-300 words per double-spaced page.

Course Materials:

Class reading materials can be found on Blackboard; please let us know if you have any problems accessing our class file.

Laptops:

Students may bring their laptops to class as there may be times when they will be using them for class exercises.

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend and be prepared for each class. The University of Houston Law Center has a minimum 80% attendance policy for students. Students who attend fewer than the minimum percentage of required classes may be automatically dropped from the course.

Grading:

Grades will be as follows: 5% class participation, 30% take home assignments (3), 5% paper presentation, 60% final paper.

Final Paper: 10-15 pages not including endnotes (use endnotes rather than footnotes): 12 point font; double spaced; 1” left and right margins, top and bottom margins;

Paper topics due by: Sept 9
First Outline due: Sept 30
First Draft due: October 26
Final draft due: December 1
Week 1 (August 24 and 26)

August 24: Overview of Class; What is Domestic Violence; History


“The Rule of Love”: Wife Beating as Prerogative and Privacy, 105 Yale L.J. 2117, June 1996

August 26: Types of DV; Protecting your client: Interviewing and Safety Planning

Safety Planning Samples
Domestic Violence Screening Samples
Power & Control Wheel (Power and Control Wheel, Equality Wheel, Teen Dating Violence Wheel)
Article: Houston Chronicle August 2015: *Search for Answers: Experts say rage common thread in domestic abuse cases*

Week 2 (August 31 and September 2)

August 31: Writing Skills (Professor Lauren Simpson)

September 2: Domestic Violence and Family Law
Divorce: Jurisdiction, Custody, Possession and Access

*Selected Texas Family Code Statutes re: Domestic Violence and Family Law*

       Holley v. Adams, 544 S.W.2d 367 (Tex. 1982) (best interest standard)
       Lewelling v. Lewelling, 796 S.W.2d 164 (Tex. 1990) (DV and custody)

Week 3 (September 7: no class (Labor Day) and 9)

September 9: Protective Orders
*Texas Family Code Statutes re: Protective Orders*

TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENT due Sept 16: Group Assignment (no more than 3 per group): Draft application and order for protection based on hypothetical given; re-write due one week after draft is returned (ProDoc and Practice Manuals are available in the clinic)
Week 4 (September 14 and 16)

September 14: Mock Trial; Protective Order Hearing

September 16: International Issues and Domestic Violence

Preventing International Abduction - Hague Convention;

Applicable Statutes: UCCJEA: Texas Family Code §§152+ and CPRC §§36+
42 U.S.C.A. 11601-11608 (International Child Abduction Remedies Act (ICARA)


Ermini v. Vittori, 758 F.3d 153 (2d Cir. 2014)

Hague Convention Helps and Powerpoint

Week 5 (September 21 and 23)

September 21: Termination and Adoption as related to domestic violence

Termination, Adoption


Article: Houston Chronicle August 2015: State tried to remove children

September 23: DV in Criminal Court


“What’s Love Got to Do With It?: Examining Domestic Violence as a Public Health Issue Using Their Eyes Were Watching God”, 81 UMKC L. Rev. 867 (Summer 2013)

Article: Houston Chronicle August 2015: Problem with rogue drones hits new heights
Week 6 (September 28 and 30)

September 28: Property and Landlord/Tenant Laws and Domestic Violence


Texas Property Code §92.016: Right to Vacate

Housing Info Client Helps

Experiential Legal Writing by Diana Donahoe (Client Letters)

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TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENT due Oct 7: Demand letter to Landlord and case update letter to client; re-write due: one week after first draft returned

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September 30: Employment Law and Domestic Violence


Tx. Labor Code § 411.103. Duty of Employer to Provide Safe Workplace


Experiential Legal Writing by Diana Donahoe (Memos)

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TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENT: first draft due Oct 21: Memo to Human Resources; re-write due: one week after draft returned

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Week 7 (October 5 and 7)

October 5: DV in Criminal Court con’d: student group work

October 7: DV and Immigration Law (VAWA and Asylum) – Speaker Sandra G. Gastanaduy-Collison

Recognizing Domestic Violence as a Basis of Asylum article
Week 8 (October 12 and 14)

October 12: DV and Immigration Law (U VISA, T VISA, SIJS) – Speaker Veronica Bernal

Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (Disability eligibility article)

October 14: Diversity and Domestic Violence
LGBT/Teen/Male Victims/Animal Law


Week 9 (October 19 and 21)

October 19: Technology and DV

Handout – Helpful ideas to protect your DV client
Article: Technology and Domestic Violence: Combating Offender’s Use of Technology and Empowering Victims: by Lynn Kamin

October 21: Best Practices and DV – Maisha Colter – Director of Litigation – Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse (AVDA) in Houston

Week 10 (October 26 and 28)

October 26: Student Presentations (3)

October 28: Student Presentations (3)

Week 11 (November 2 and 4)

November 2: Student conferences re: final paper

November 4: Student conferences re: final paper

Week 12 (November 9 and 11)

November 9: Student Presentations (3)
November 11:  Student Presentations (3)

Week 13 (November 16 and 18)

November 16:  Student Presentations (3)

November 18: Professionalism; Managing Difficult and High Maintenance Clients
Ethical Issues Attorney re: DV -- Speaker: Attorney Adam Morris
High-Conflict Divorce: Legal and Psychological Challenges, Houston Lawyer
March/April 2008
Dealing with Manipulative People (excerpt from “In Sheep’s Clothing” by George K. Simmon)
Compassion Fatigue and Attorneys, Texas Bar Journal, September 2010.

Week 14 (November 23)

November 23: Last Class  Law Practice Management (Invited Speakers)
Speakers:  Kimberly Levi and Melissa Cass

Being the “Lincoln Lawyer” –Law Practice Management on the Road by Kenneth Raggio