

Reproductive Rights (5250/26001)

Fall 2026

Wednesdays, 5:30-7:30pm

Syllabus and Course Policies

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Mode of Instruction: Face-to-Face

Introduction and Course Objectives

Welcome to this Reproductive Rights seminar. In the wake of the US Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs*, which overruled *Roe v. Wade*, the question of whether and how federal and state governments should regulate reproduction is more pressing than ever. This course will provide students with the tools to answer this question by exploring the law and theory of reproductive regulation in the United States. Students will learn both historical and contemporary approaches— including reproductive rights and reproductive justice frameworks— equipping them to understand how the law reached this point and how it could change going forward. This course will not focus on abortion alone, but will instead address a broad range of reproductive issues including the regulation of pregnancy, birth, families, assisted reproductive technologies, and more.

Learning Objectives

As part of this course, students will be expected to learn and understand: (1) the historical foundations of laws and policies touching on human reproduction in the United States (including not just the law, but also cultural and societal factors as well), (2) present and potential future controversies, and (3) the links between reproductive rights and other legal areas, including property law, family law and constitutional law. Students will read and analyze a variety of sources, including case law, other primary legal sources as well as secondary sources, and will be able to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of a broad range of arguments and apply the law and legal arguments to contemporary issues.

Required Text

Murray and Luker, *Cases on Reproductive Rights and Justice* (2nd ed. 2022)

Other materials necessary for the course will be distributed via Canvas.

Class Hours

We will meet Wednesdays from 5:30 to 7:30pm. Please note that, when a more detailed version of the syllabus is made available at the beginning of the semester, it may appear that the reading requirements for this class are longer than in your other classes. Keep in mind that we meet only once per week, and so only have 14 class sessions together, unlike many of your other courses which may meet two or three times per week.

Office Hours

As a practicing attorney, I am not at the Law Center regularly. I will strive to hold office hours either immediately before or immediately after our weekly class. I can also make myself available by appointment through the miracle of Zoom or if you would like to visit my office in downtown Houston. It would also help me to be available for class members to let me know in advance if they would like to speak with me as part of office hours.

Attendance

In-person attendance for all classes is expected consistent with UHLC policy—80%. This threshold means that students must attend 12 out of 14 classes. If you are unable to attend in person, you may request that the class be made available live via Zoom. Such exceptions shall be granted only for good cause (e.g. illness or inclement weather) in the instructor's sole discretion.

Your Grade

I hope that my approach to grading and evaluating your performance in this class will be a balanced one. Your grade will consist of four components:

- (1) Class participation—Per UHLC policy, a final grade may be raised or lowered by one-third of a letter grade for class participation.
- (2) Weekly “journaling” -- 33%
- (3) Final exam – 67%

Note that the final exam is closed book and in-person. Minus accommodations cleared with UHLC, students will not be allowed to take the exam from home or another location.

Class Participation

This is the basic requirement of not only coming to class, but coming to class *prepared*, and includes not only responding when called upon, but having other comments, questions or feedback for me and/or for your classmates.

Journaling

I realize that not everyone is as comfortable with that traditional type of participation, which is why I added the third element. Each week, I ask for a two-page response (double-spaced) to the week's readings (or another topic relevant to our course discussion which may be in the news). This is meant to be an alternative measure of your engagement with the course materials. Even if you do not feel comfortable raising your hand, you can participate in this way. These are graded in binary fashion. If you complete the requirement, you get a 100. If you do not, you get a zero. I do not expect law review articles or polished op-eds. I do not care about citation format or proper footnoting. I expect you to show reasoned and rigorous engagement with the topic, potentially reflections of a personal nature, and compliance with the Law Center's standards on honesty, integrity and plagiarism. These responses are due by midnight on the Tuesday prior to our class (meaning the Tuesday turning into Wednesday, not Monday turning into Tuesday). You will post them on Canvas where all members of our class can read them. You must complete at least 12 such journaling assignments for full credit of this portion.

Honor Code

The UHLC Honor Code applies to all aspects of this course. You are responsible for knowing all Honor Code provisions and for complying with the Honor Code. Please inquire if you have any questions regarding how the Honor Code's provisions apply to specific activities or situations related to this course. Your continuing enrollment in this course is deemed to be a pledge by you under the Honor Code to comply with the Honor Code in relation to this course and to comply with the instructions in the course syllabus.

Atmosphere and Expectations

I am aware that in this course, we are addressing topics that are of deep personal significance, involving one's deeply-held moral, political and religious beliefs. You are not asked to "check" or leave behind those beliefs or strong feelings at the door. In fact, having students with differing beliefs and viewpoints can only strengthen our discussion. Nevertheless, I must insist that we (including myself) treat one another's views and persons with mutual respect. I will endeavor to respect your opinions and beliefs, and will demand the same for mine, even when (and maybe especially when) we disagree. This is not simply a matter of temperament, personal preference or pedagogical philosophy; rather, learning to disagree with colleagues, opponents and others in ways that are ethical, cordial, rational and respectful is an important part of what it means to be an attorney.

I will not tolerate personal attacks, insults, bullying (of the cyber or in-person varieties), or other behavior that I deem to be inconsistent with these expectations. Note that these expectations are not a license to shut out any person's viewpoints, but are meant to ensure that all can share their opinions and thoughts in a way that enriches our class discussion. I would invite all of you to not treat this class as an opportunity to score points (of the non-grade variety), browbeat, humiliate, proselytize or recruit others to your side of a debate. Please do not treat our class as an opportunity to "go viral." I am not at all interested in, nor will your grade be based to any extent on, measuring the degree to which you agree with me on these topics, or that your views are the "right" ones (or are aligned with any particular political philosophy or moral position). Rather, your grade will be based solely on your abilities to learn the law and principles taught, apply them, and communicate with me and your classmates effectively and respectfully.

If you are struggling with these expectations, or feel that other members of the class (even if that includes me!) are not living up to them, please approach me during office hours.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Generative artificial intelligence is a form of machine learning that creates new and original output based on the data it has been trained on or has access to, employing algorithms to generate content in response to prompts. Examples of the technology include what are known as generative "large language models" (LLMs). Two well-known LLM implementations are ChatGPT and Claude. LLM output can include text, images, music, code, and more. This syllabus policy covers the textual output of generative LLMs (AI-Generated Work Product)—which can include computer code or programs and human-language content. Because AI-Generated Work Product can often mimic human intelligence, it could potentially be used as a substitute for a student's own work product. Such use is potentially problematic to the extent that it becomes a substitute for internalized student understanding of the material or creates a dependency on AI-Generated Work Product, which may be strictly prohibited in settings that include the bar examination.

Prohibition

Subject to the exceptions immediately below, your continuing enrollment in this course constitutes your pledge not to generate or to use any AI-Generated Work Product—whether from yourself or others—in relation to any assessment in this course. The term “assessment” means any graded or ungraded work product for this course that is submitted to the instructor, presented in a class session, or used in an oral or written graded assessment for this course.

Exceptions

The following AI-Generated Work Product uses are exceptions to the preceding prohibition. The exceptions’ intent is to allow the generation and use of AI-Generated Work Product for specific, narrowly defined activities related to this course.

- You may generate and use AI-Generated Work Product for class preparation, although you must disclose the full extent of that use if your instructor asks. You may generate and use AI-Generated Work Product for study supplements to aid with general understanding of course content. This could take different forms that include creating examples or explanations of a concept, generation of diagrams and flow charts, “gamification” of course content, flash cards for study, or sample questions and answers.
- You may generate and use AI-Generated Work Product for an outline that summarizes the course content.
- You may use AI-Generated Work Product to check your originally drafted text for misspellings, grammar and punctuation errors, strength and clarity of prose, verbosity, effective transitional language and thesis sentences, word choice, excessive passive voice, and like things.
- You may use AI-Generated Work Product for the purpose of language translation.

Class Recording

Students may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without advanced written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center. If you have an accommodation to record class related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use instructor’s recordings for their own studying and notetaking. Instructor’s recordings are not authorized to be shared with anyone without the prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

Accommodations

The University of Houston is committed to providing an academic environment and educational programs that are accessible for its students. Any student with a disability who is experiencing barriers to learning, assessment or participation is encouraged to contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center (Dart Center) to learn more about academic accommodations and support that may be available to them. Students seeking academic accommodations will need to register with the Dart Center as soon as possible to ensure timely implementation of approved accommodations. Please contact the Dart Center by visiting the website: <https://uh.edu/accessibility/> calling (713) 743-5400 or emailing jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU.

If you require any support services, you may contact Ms. Samantha Ary, Academic Records Coordinator. Ms. Ary is located in in the Office of Student Services suite, and she can be reached at sary@central.uh.edu or (713) 743-7466. Requests for accommodation that involve graded assignments must be directed to Ms. Ary and should be made as soon as possible to allow adequate time to document and to process the request. If you observe religious or cultural holidays that will coincide with synchronous class sessions or conferences, please let either instructor know as soon as possible, so that we may make arrangements.

Anti-Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy

UHLC and the University of Houston are committed to maintaining and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment in which students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from discrimination and sexual misconduct. If you have experienced an incident of discrimination or sexual misconduct, a confidential reporting process is available to you. For more information, please refer to the University system's Anti-Discrimination Policy webpage, Anti-Discrimination Policy, Sexual Misconduct Policy webpage, and Sexual Misconduct Policy. Under the University Sexual Misconduct Policy, your instructor is a "responsible employee" for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and state law and must report incidents of sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual intimidation, intimate partner violence, or stalking) about which they become aware to the Title IX office. Please know there are places on campus where you can make a report in confidence. You can find more information about resources on the Title IX website at <https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/title-ix-sexual-misconduct/resources/>.