

## Reproductive Rights

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### Syllabus and Course Policies

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#### Introduction

Welcome to this Reproductive Rights seminar. In this course, we will be looking at law and policy around issues such as abortion, birth control, assisted reproductive technologies, parenthood and surrogacy. We will look at the evolution of these topics over the previous century in the United States, as well as potential issues that loom in the future.

This semester is the first time I am teaching law school, though it is something I have wanted to do for a very long time. In my “spare” time, I am a full-time practicing attorney at Greenberg Traurig here in Houston, where I practice health care transactional and regulatory law. Please keep this in mind for office hours and contacting me outside of class. I look forward to learning together with you this semester.

#### Required Text

Murray and Luker, *Cases on Reproductive Rights and Justice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2022) (note that this is a new edition published this year)

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

#### Class Hours

We will meet Tuesdays 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 twice 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. 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.

## 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 attendance—You will lose points for every class session you do not attend, unless you are cleared for such absence at least 24 hours in advance (or in case of an emergency, at least one hour in advance)—25%
- (2) Class participation—12.5%
- (3) Weekly “journaling”—12.5%
- (4) Final exam or paper – 50%

The first one is maybe self-explanatory; however, I will endeavor to give more detail on the last three.

## 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 Monday prior to our class (meaning the Monday turning into Tuesday, not Sunday turning into Monday). You will post them on Blackboard where all members of our class can read them.

## Final exam

This is another optional requirement. You can take an in-class final exam, which will address the cumulative sum of the knowledge and topics we have discussed in class, or you can submit a final paper of 15 or more pages (which is expected to be more polished than your weekly journal entries, and have proper citations, etc.). If you choose the paper route (the paper will be due at the beginning of our scheduled exam), I invite you to meet with me at least one month in advance to discuss potential topics.

## 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. While emotions may run high on all sides, I must insist that we 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. The term "safe space" is perhaps overutilized and maligned in some circles, but I am serious about making sure that our class time together is a safe space for **all** students to participate. 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. I am not terribly interested in measuring the degree to which you agree with me on these topics, or that your views are the "right" ones, but that you learn the law and principles taught and are able to employ them.

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 privately.