

Syllabus  
Children and the Law (6357/22827)  
Spring 2024  
Tuesday and Thursday: 1:00 - 2:30 PM

Professor Ellen Marrus, emerita  
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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:30 – Noon and by appointment. I may add additional hours after the start of the semester.

**Required Course Materials:**

2023 copy of the Texas Family Code. I would suggest if you plan on practicing family law to buy a hard copy. If not, the hard copies are quite expensive, and you can find the statutes online.

[https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child\\_Protection/Attorneys\\_Guide/default.asp](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child_Protection/Attorneys_Guide/default.asp) This is a guide designed for attorneys representing CPS, but it will be helpful to all of you in your representation of CPS, parents, or children.

Additional materials will be distributed in class, by email or online.

**Objectives:**

By the end of the course, you will be able to

- have a knowledge of the cases and statutes that govern the child welfare system in Texas;
- will relate this knowledge to the practical and ethical issues that arise in the practice of child dependency cases;
- will integrate this knowledge of the law into the practice of child dependency by handling a mock case; and
- will understand the policies that affect the child welfare system.

**Assignments:**

All assignments are subject to change. Any changes will be distributed as quickly as possible and will be announced in class, posted online, or distributed via email to the entire class. Be sure to check your UHLC emails on a regular basis.

**Class Preparation and Participation:**

You are responsible for being prepared for each class session. I call on students randomly and simulated interviews and court proceedings are part of your class participation. Your participation at all times can affect your grade in this class. Excellent participation (always prepared and providing insightful commentary for class and simulations) can raise your grade

1/3. If you are unprepared for two class sessions your grade will be lowered by 1/3.

**Class Attendance:**

(Face to face) The UH registration system instruction mode for this course is listed in parenthesis. After student registration opens, there may be instruction mode changes to this course up through two weeks before the first day of classes for the term but notice of such changes will be sent to then registered students. For this instruction mode, we are expected to normally be present in the classroom. All simulations and assessments will be conducted in the classroom and will require your physical presence. Attendance will be taken at all class meetings. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late to class you will be counted absent for that day. Students are not allowed to miss more than eight (8) class sessions and may be dropped from the class if they do. There may be two to three class sessions that are not held at our regular scheduled time. This is to conduct our simulations. The class session may be extended, held in the evening, or on the weekend. This will be coordinated with student schedules in the beginning of the semester.

**Grading:**

Your grade in this course will be based on the following:

1. **Role plays:** client and witness interviews, and various child welfare hearings.
2. **Policy paper:** Each student will be responsible for writing a policy paper on the child welfare system.
3. **Additional writing assignments:** client interview notes, case file, motions, and a trial brief.

**Preferred Name/Pronoun:**

I want to address each of you in a manner that corresponds to your identity. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Feel free to reach out to me if this should change any time during the semester or if you have concerns about how I or your classmates address you. I will try my best to honor your preferences. During court simulated proceedings I will refer to you by Attorney [surname], as will your classmates.

**Class Attire:**

When you are conducting your client or witness interviews you should dress in the same way you would if you were actually handling the case. The same is true for all simulated court hearings.

**The Use of Artificial Intelligence is Prohibited in the Course**

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) is prohibited in this course. Using AI for any of your formal or informal assessments (simulations, papers, case file, briefs, motions, etc.) is not permitted. This prohibition applies whether the material is to be graded or ungraded. This prohibition applies whether the assessment, assignment or exercise is prepared in or outside of class. Your writings for this course are to be your own work composed without the aid of AI.

**Honor Code:**

The UHLC Honor Code applies to all aspects of my class. You are responsible for knowing all Honor Code provisions and for complying with the Honor Code. Please ask me if you have any questions regarding how the Honor Code's provisions apply to specific activities or situations related to my course. It is an Honor Code violation to review the graded assignments distributed to, or written by, any of my students from prior years.

**Diversity, Inclusion, and Wellness**

This is an inclusive learning space.

At UHLC, we are committed to ensuring inclusive online and classroom learning spaces, where you'll be treated with respect and dignity, and where everyone is provided the equitable opportunity to participate, to contribute, and to succeed.

In this course, all students are welcome regardless of socio-economic status, age, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, national origin, veteran's status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, political affiliation, marital status and other diverse identities that we each bring to class. Our class is richer for this diversity.

Inclusive learning spaces facilitate the innovation and creative thought that enhance student success. This success arises from the participation, support, and understanding of you and your colleagues. Several of the topics we will discuss may be of a sensitive nature or something that you strongly agree or disagree with. I encourage you to speak up and to share your views, but also understand that you are doing so in a learning environment in which we're all expected to engage respectfully and with regard to the dignity of all others.

If you feel like your class performance is impacted in any way by your experiences inside or outside of class, please reach out to me. I want to be a resource for you. If you feel more comfortable speaking with someone besides me, Student Services is an excellent resource: 713-743-2182.

**Sexual Misconduct Policy:**

The University is committed to maintaining and strengthening an educational, working and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from discrimination and sexual misconduct. If you have experienced an incident of discrimination or sexual misconduct, there is a confidential reporting process available to you. For more information, please refer to the University system's Anti-Discrimination Policy SAM 01.D.07 and Sexual Misconduct Policy SAM 01.D.08, available here:

<http://www.uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/uhs-policies/sams/01-general-information/index.php>

<http://www.uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/docs/sam/01/1d7.pdf> (antidiscrimination)

<http://www.uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/docs/sam/01/1d8.pdf> (sexual misconduct)

Please be aware that under the sexual misconduct policy, SAM 01.D.08, faculty are required to report to the University any information received regarding sexual misconduct as defined in the policy. Please note that the reporting obligations under the sexual misconduct policy reach to employees and students. Also, as a required reporting party, Law Center employees and faculty members are not a confidential resource.

### **Reasonable Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids**

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](mailto:jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU)

### **Counseling and Psychological Services:**

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help students who are having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to the demands of a professional program, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS ([www.uh.edu/caps](http://www.uh.edu/caps)) by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or someone you know is in crisis. No appointment is necessary for the “Let’s Talk” program, a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus.

[http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets\\_talk.html](http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html)

The Texas Lawyers’ Assistance Program (“TLAP”) also supports law students who are dealing with stress, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and other mental health problems. You can reach TLAP at any time at 1-800-343-8527. TLAP’s website includes a page with links to sources about mental health that are of interest to law students:

<https://www.tlaphelps.org/law-students>.

### **Recording of Class**

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.

### **Resources for Online Learning**

The University of Houston is committed to student success and provides information to optimize the online learning experience through our Power-On website. Please visit this website for a comprehensive set of resources, tools, and tips including obtaining access to the internet, AccessUH, Blackboard and Canvas; requesting a laptop through the Laptop Loaner Program; using your smartphone as a webcam; and downloading Microsoft Office 365 at no cost. For questions or assistance contact [UHOnline@uh.edu](mailto:UHOnline@uh.edu).

### **Helpful Information:**

**COVID-19 Updates:** <https://uh.edu/covid-19/>

**Coogs Care:** <https://www.uh.edu/dsaes/coogscare/>

**Laptop Checkout Requests:** <https://www.uh.edu/infotech/about/planning/offcampus/index.php#do-you-need-a-laptop>

**Health FAQs:** <https://uh.edu/covid-19/faq/health-wellness-prevention-faqs/>

**Student Health Center:** <https://uh.edu/class/english/lcc/current-students/student-healthcenter/index.php>