

# Divorce and Its Legal Implications

## Course Syllabus

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## Course Information

### Course Description

As divorce rates in the U.S. have risen over the years, an increasing number of individuals are affected by divorce in some aspect of their lives.

This course will give students a general overview of family law. In our discussion, we will explore issues such as domestic violence, child custody, and the “best interest of the child” standard in determining their effect on the divorce process. We will also discuss the financial and emotional implications surrounding the dissolution of a marriage and the role that these factors play in the divorce process.

We will then explore the idea of divorce reform and whether this might be a solution to the increasing rate of divorces in the U.S. More specifically, students will be asked to analyze several of the proposed reforms in light of their new understanding of family law and determine if they believe that reform is the appropriate answer to this complex issue.

### Course Learning Goals

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Identify how and why the laws of divorce have evolved over the years.
- Explain the laws governing divorce and how they affect each step of the entire divorce process.
- Explain the “best interest of the child” standard and how it is applied to child custody.
- Identify the emotional and financial implications of divorce.
- Identify and analyze different proposed reforms for divorce and determine whether you believe they are the proper solution for the rising rates of divorce.

### Course Resources

#### Required Text Book:

Ventura J., & Reed, M. (2005). *Divorce for Dummies, 2nd ed.* New York, NY: Wiley Publishers. ISBN 0764584170

## Course Competences

In this course, you will develop the following competences:

Competence	Competence Statement
H-4	Can analyze power relations among racial, social, cultural, or economic groups in the United States.
H-1-D	Can explain a system of law that governs a society.
H-2-B	Can use public or private institutions as resources for understanding a social issue.
A-3-G	Can assess the assumptions and implications of significant ideas about human experience.

### Relationship of this course to the competence statements

#### H-4

You will learn about the historical evolution of the laws governing divorce. This will be both in the context how the law itself has evolved and also when discussing the dramatic rise in divorce rates in the U.S. Additionally, when discussing the issue of domestic violence, you will be able to explain the power struggles that are present when victims of domestic violence are involved in custody disputes. Then you will learn about the laws that have been put in place in order to assist and empower these victims to overcome their situations.

#### H-1-D

You will learn the laws governing divorce in the U.S. You will be able to explain the relationship between these laws and the different steps in the divorce process.

#### H-2-B

While learning about the laws governing divorce, you will learn how the court system actually interprets these laws and applies them to different situations throughout the divorce process. You will identify how these laws particularly affect issues of child custody.

#### A-3-G

You will discuss the financial and emotional implications of the divorce process on individuals. You will analyze whether divorce reform might be a solution to rising rates of divorce.

## Course Structure

This course consists of 6 modules. Modules 1 and 6 will each take **one week** to complete. Modules 2 to 5 will each take **two weeks** to complete.

To view the course schedule, click on the [Schedule](#) link on the left-hand navigation bar. This page contains the most recently updated listing of the topics and assignments due for each week of the course.

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## Assessment

The following are criteria for receiving a passing grade. The criteria for passing require that:

- You participate consistently and constructively in the course by completing the readings and Assessments by their

due dates.

- You submit your proposal, outline and final paper by their due dates. Note that the submission of a proposal and the submission of an outline are required.
- The written proposal must be no longer than 500 words and describe the topic you will write about and how you will weave in some of the different areas of divorce law discussed in the course.
- **OUTLINE FOR FINAL PAPER:** The outline must contain an introduction, and roman numerals indicating the areas that will be discussed along with points under each roman numeral indicating how you plan to develop these topics in the body of your paper. The outline must also include a conclusion that brings the paper together.
- You consistently, actively, and in a timely fashion participate in the online discussions.

## Assessment Criteria for Writing Assessments

- Your participation and advance in terms of concepts and competencies will be assessed in the weekly discussion forums.

You must submit your written assignments on time. Each module has one written assignment that must be submitted in the Assignments area of the course website.

- Each written assignment will be worth 5 points. One point is automatically deducted if an assessment is posted late.

## Assessment Criteria for your Final Paper or Project

It is important that your final paper:

- Is 8-10 pages long, excluding references.
- Demonstrates that you understand the material learned in the course.
- Applies the material learned in the course to the paper topic chosen.
- Organizes your supportive evidence into relevant paragraphs that address your subject.
- Is organized. You must have an introduction laying out the points you will discuss in the paper. The body of the paper must flesh out these points. And then you must write a conclusion.
- Demonstrates that you are able to integrate the evidence derived from your chosen sources into your argument according in Standard English using proper grammar, mechanics, and sentence structure.
- Uses proper quotation form, including introduction of your quotation as well as your commentary following the quotation.
- Contains proper APA or MLA citation form for in-text references as well as for the reference list.

## Assessment Criteria for Online Discussion Participation

In the online discussions you clearly and consistently link what you are learning in the course to your real life experiences.

Specifically, in order to receive credit for your participation in the online discussion parts of the course it is important that:

- You are able to contribute to the online discussions in a collegial fashion. Especially you may begin your contributions with addressing your peer students, may maintain a kind and collegial tone and close with your signature.
- You regularly demonstrate good “listening” skills and active inquiry skills in the online discussions. This means that you pay attention with openness to the commentary of others and you offer constructive and interested commentary, whether in the form of questions or statements.
- You contribute your own original ideas to the online discussion in ways that facilitated learning for other people.

## Course Grading Scale

A = 95 to 100	A- = 91 to 94	B+ = 88 to 90
B = 85 to 87	B- = 81 to 84	C+ = 77 to 80
C = 73 to 76	C- = 69 to 72	D+ = 65 to 68
D = 61 to 64	F = 60 or below	INC

For SNL courses taken for Pass/Fail, a “Pass” represents a grade of “A” for purposes of financial aid and employer reimbursement.

Students wishing to declare a Pass/Fail option must do so before the end of the 2nd week of the quarter.

### Percent distribution of Assessments

Each assessment – 6 total (5 points)	30 %
Final Paper topic assignment (5 points)	5%
Outline for final paper (5 points)	15%
Final Paper (25 points)	25%
Participation	25%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Online Participation Guidelines

The following guidelines may encourage you to be active and critical in your participation, only together we will make this course a significant and pleasant learning experience:

- Participation is essential, so please connect to the course every day or at least every second day.
- Post your response to the discussion Assessments in the first part of the week, in the second part of the week post comments to the other students.
- Discuss critically, give support to your peers, provide own ideas and experiences, challenge ideas of others or just make a comment that you read the posting.
- The role of the instructor, to make it easy for you to interact, to promote significant discussion, to give feed back on your postings and offer help where needed.
- This is not an independent study course, but a paced online group learning experience. This study guide indicates 6 to 11 hours per week of your time to be spent on this course of ten weeks.
- Please accept the challenge to work with others, to construct knowledge in negotiation with others. Working individually on the Assessments and just posting them might not lead to significant knowledge and skills.

***Some difficulties at the beginning of an online course are quite normal; solving them is part of every distance learning experience.***

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## Policies

### Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a

context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If a instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion.

## Disability Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) determines appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. For certain learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders, the Productive Learning Strategies Program (PLuS) determines the appropriate accommodations. See the instructor for more information or call OSD at 773-325-7290 (phone) or 773-325-7296 (TTY); or call PLuS at 773-325-1677.

## Incomplete Grades

The intent of the Incomplete grade is to allow students extra time to complete their final assignments. This need arises because, in the closing weeks of the course, they have an event of significant magnitude that adversely affects their ability to complete the course, e.g. serious illness, death in the family, overseas deployment, or natural disaster.

You must request an incomplete grade in writing two weeks before the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades will be considered only after you have satisfactorily completed at least 75 percent of the coursework, and you have such an unexpected, uncontrollable event that prevents you from completing your course. Do not assume that you will qualify for an incomplete. Students who are failing the course at the point where they request an incomplete will not receive one, nor will they be granted after the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of the instructor.

If you do receive permission from the instructor to take an incomplete in the course, you will be required to complete a contract with the instructor, specifying how you will finish the missing work within the next two quarters (excluding summer). Incompletes not finished by the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) will automatically become an F grade on your transcript.

Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee.

**NOTE:** In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four week grace period before final degree certification.

## Protection of Human Subjects

For more information see: <http://research.depaul.edu/>.

Demonstrating the acquisition of competences in this course can involve “interactions”—interviewing and or observing other people—discussing those interviews or observations with other class members and writing them up in one or more final report(s). As such, these activities qualify as “research” with “human subjects” and are subject to University and Federal guidelines. Because it takes place in the context of this course, your research is exempt from approval by the School for New Learning’s Local Review Board only under the following conditions:

1. The information you collect is EXCLUSIVELY for the purpose of classroom discussion and will NOT be used after the term is over. If there is any possibility that you will EVER use it in further research or for publication, you must obtain approval from the Local Review Board before you begin.
2. You assess and ensure that no “harm”—physical, mental, or social—does or could result from either your interviews and/or observations or your discussion and/or reports.
3. The privacy and confidentiality of those that you interview or observe must be protected. Unless you receive specific permission, in writing, from the person(s) you interview or observe, please change their names, and make sure that their identity cannot be readily ascertained from the information you provide.
  - a. If you want to use real names and relationships, they must sign an “informed consent” document. For information on creating an “informed consent document” see, for example, <http://www.research.umn.edu/consent>.

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## Course Expectations

### Time Management and Attendance

SNL’s online courses are not self-paced and require a regular time commitment EACH week throughout the quarter.

You are required to log in to your course at least four times a week so that you can participate in the ongoing course discussions.

Online courses are no less time consuming than “face to face” courses. You will have to dedicate some time every day or at least every second day to your studies. A typical four credit hour “face to face” course at SNL involves three hours of classroom meeting per week, plus at least three to six hours of study and homework per week.

This course will require at least the same time commitment, but your learning activities will be spread out through the week. If you have any problems with your technology, or if you need to improve your reading or writing skills, it may take even longer.

The instructor should be notified if your life events do not allow you to participate in the course and the online discussions for more than one week. This is particularly important when there are group discussions or you are working as part of a team.

If you find yourself getting behind, please contact the instructor immediately.

## Your Instructor's Role

Your instructor's role in this course is that of a discussion facilitator and learning advisor. It is not their responsibility to make sure you log in regularly and submit your assignments. As instructor, s/he will read all postings to the general discussion forums on a daily basis but may not choose to respond to each posting. You will receive feedback to assignments.

The instructor may choose to designate "office hours" when s/he will be online and available and will immediately respond to questions. Depending on the instructor, this response may be by e-mail, instant messenger or telephone. Otherwise, you will generally receive a response to emailed or posted queries within 48 hours.

## Your Role as a Student

As an online student, you will be taking a proactive approach to your learning. As the course instructor's role is that of a learning guide, your role is that of the leader in your own learning.

You will be managing your own time so that you can complete the readings, activities and assignments for the course, and you will also be expected to take a more active role in peer learning.

## Credits

*This course was designed and produced by Maria F. Mora, J.D., and staff at the Center for Distance Education of the School for New Learning of DePaul University.*

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