

Course Syllabus
Immigration & Family Law – (5391/25156) Fall 2026 DRAFT 03 2026
University of Houston Law Center
Fall 2026 – M/W 5:30pm-7:00pm - ZOOM
Profs. Rosemary Vega and Janet Heppard

Course Description:

In this class, students will work individually and in groups to find legal solutions to hypothetical situations where immigration and family law intersect (e.g. marriage/paternity, divorce/custody, adoption, domestic violence, and the Hague Convention). Students will study and learn about family-based immigration law and how it relates to representation of individuals in both family and immigration court. This course will help students develop the practical skills that will enable them to successfully represent clients who are seeking immigration benefits through a family member and the practical aspects of representation of non-citizens in family court.

Course Materials: Class reading materials can be found on *Canvas*; please let us know if you have any problems accessing our class file. In order to cover the material in the allotted time, you are expected to read all assignments prior to class.

Class Mode: Synchronous Online via ZOOM

Laptops: There will be times laptops will be used for class exercises in addition to zoom

Office Hours:

To meet with the professors regarding the class, students should email them with available dates and times. rosemary@rvegalaw.com and jheppard@central.uh.edu (meetings can be in person, by phone, or via ZOOM or other virtual online program)

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. A student's non-adherence will be notified to the Office of Student Affairs" (OSA). Students who attend fewer than the minimum percentage of required classes may be automatically dropped from the course. We appreciate your letting us know if you are going to miss a particular class.

Learning Outcomes for this Course:

- Increased knowledge of the intersection of Immigration and Family Law
- Development of Interviewing and Counseling Skills
- Improvement in legal writing skills
- Mastery of relevant substantive law in areas including Family Law and Immigration Law
- Increased knowledge of stress management skills
- Recognition of the benefits of cultural sensitivity in the legal field
- Enhanced knowledge in law practice management

Assessment:

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

65% in-class final exam (anonymous assessment), 30% take home assignments (non-anonymous assessment), 5% class participation (non-anonymous assessment). For the final exam, 1 single-sided, double-spaced pages of notes will be allowed.

Final Exam: Exam Date: TBA – time to be announced – online final

Expectations:

Be present in class: webcams should be on at all times unless you have been excused

Be on-time to class and connected to the internet video-conference when the class starts

If your computer is a laptop, you must not be distracted by traveling or other activities when you join the internet video-conference unless specifically excused by the instructor

You must identify yourself with your class roll name on the ZOOM window

Ask questions: ZOOM classes >> raise your hand or the zoom hand if you have a question

OR ask your question in the chat box

Maintain a schedule to get your class work done and keep up with all readings and assignments

Keep your eye on the prize ... and the end of the semester

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 provision 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.

AI Generated Text:

General.

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.

Chosen Names and Preferred Pronouns:

We want to address each of you in a manner that corresponds to your identity. Although mistakes happen, chosen names and preferred pronouns—including non-binary ones such as they|them|their—must be respected in my classroom. Please feel free to reach out to us at any time if you want to make me aware of your chosen name or preferred pronoun or if you have concerns about how we or your classmates address you.

Student Professionalism

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 background or identity. We encourage you to speak up and share your views appropriately throughout the semester and to engage respectfully and with professionalism toward each other. In the words of the [Texas Lawyer's Creed](#), “[a] lawyer should always adhere to the highest principles of professionalism.”

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

Title IX/Sexual Misconduct

Per the UHS 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/>.

Security Escorts and Cougar Ride

UHPD continually works with the University community to make the campus a safe place to learn, work, and live. The security escort service is designed for the community members who have safety concerns and would like to have a Security Officer walk with them, for their safety, as they make their way across campus. Based on availability either a UHPD Security Officer or Police Officer will escort students, faculty, and staff to locations beginning and ending on campus. If you feel that you need a Security Officer to walk with you for your safety, please call 713-743-3333. Arrangements may be made for special needs.

Parking and Transportation Services also offers a late-night, on-demand shuttle service called “Cougar Ride” that provides rides to and from all on-campus shuttle stops, as well as the MD Anderson Library, Cougar Village/Moody Towers and the UH Technology Bridge. Rides can be requested through the UH Go app. Days and hours of operation can be found at <https://uh.edu/af-university-services/parking/cougar-ride/>.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

The University of Houston has a number of resources to support students’ mental health and overall wellness, including CoogsCARE and the UH Go App. UH Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers 24/7 mental health support for all students, addressing various concerns like stress, college adjustment and sadness. CAPS provides individual and couples counseling, group therapy, workshops and connections to other support services on and off-campus. For assistance visit uh.edu/caps, call 713-743-5454, or visit a Let’s Talk location in-person or virtually. Let’s Talk are daily, informal confidential consultations with CAPS therapists where no appointment or paperwork is needed.

Need Support Now? - If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call CAPS crisis support 24/7 at 713-743-5454, or the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988, or chat 988lifeline.org.

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.

The Student Health Center offers a Psychiatry Clinic for enrolled UH students. Call 713-743-5149 during clinic hours, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. to schedule an appointment.

The A.D. Bruce Religion Center offers spiritual support and a variety of programs centered on well-being.

The Center for Student Advocacy and Community (CSAC) is where you can go if you need help but don’t know where to start. CSAC is a “home away from home” and serves as a resource hub to help you get the resources needed to support academic and personal success. Through our Cougar Cupboard, all students

can get up to 30 lbs of FREE groceries a week. Additionally, we provide 1:1 appointments to get you connected to on- and off-campus resources related to essential needs, safety and advocacy, and more. The Cougar Closet is a registered student organization advised by our office and offers free clothes to students so that all Coogs can feel good in their fit. We also host a series of cultural and community-based events that fosters social connection and helps the cougar community come closer together. Visit the CSAC homepage or follow us on Instagram: @uh_CSAC and @uhcupbrd. YOU belong here.

Women and Gender Resource Center

This center has been consolidated into a new department under a different name:

<https://thedailycougar.com/2025/11/18/uh-to-consolidate-women-and-gender-resource-center-into-a-new-parent-and-family-office/>

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.

Syllabus Changes

Please note there may be needed modifications to the course syllabus. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through email.

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 (<https://uh.edu/power-on/learning/>). Please visit this website for a comprehensive set of resources, tools, and tips including: obtaining access to the internet, AccessUH, and Canvas; using your smartphone as a webcam; and downloading Microsoft Office 365 at no cost. For questions or assistance contact UHOnline@uh.edu.

UH Email:

Please check and use your CougarNet email for communications related to this course. Faculty use the CougarNet email to respond to course-related inquiries such as grade queries or progress reports for reasons of FERPA. To access your CougarNet email, login to your Microsoft 365 account with your CougarNet credentials. Visit University Information Technology (UIT) for instructions on how to connect your CougarNet e-mail on a mobile device.

Week 1

August 24 and 26: Course Overview – Texas Family Law; Federal Immigration Law

Week 2

August 31: Visa Bulletin; Priority Dates; Filing a Family-Based Petition

TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENT due September 24: Draft I-130 Petition based on facts provided.

September 2: Child Status Protection Act, Adam Walsh Act, Death of the Petitioner

Week 3

September 7: No Class – Labor Day

September 9: Conditional Permanent Resident Status and K-Visas

Week 4

**September 14: Divorce Proceedings in Family Court:
Divorce/Jurisdiction/Custody (Standing/Access/Child Support)/UCCJEA (2 classes)**

September 16: Divorce Proceedings – cont'd

Week 5

September 21: Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption in Family Court

**September 23: International/Intercountry Adoption basics – Speaker: Attorney Justine Daly
– Justine Daly Law (Immigration and Family Law)**

Week 6

September 28: Consular Processing; Accompanying v. Following to Join; Cross-Chargeability

September 30: Advance Parole and Military Parole in Place

Week 7

October 5: Adjustment of Status

October 7: Family Law Applications of the Hague Convention (International Abduction/Enforcement)

Week 8

October 12: Waivers: Unlawful Presence, Misrepresentation, Provisional Waivers, who does not qualify for a waiver

October 14: Inadmissibility Issues: Public Charge, Security related grounds, etc

Week 9

Quiz and Review – via ZOOM

October 19: In-Class Quiz

This week will include a quiz (multiple choice and short answer) as a review of what the class has studied so far. The quiz will **not** be graded and will be discussed in class following completion of the quiz. The quizzes will also be turned in at the end of class so that the professors may make comments and then return the quizzes to the students.

Each student will submit one short answer question and one multiple choice question (along with the answers) by email to the professors by October 7. These questions may be used in the quiz and will otherwise be used to help review the material covered thus far.

The quiz is designed to help students determine their level of understanding of the course as well as to help the professors focus on where students need more help. If a student does not do well on the quiz, the student should make an appointment with one of the professors so that the professor can help the student better understand the course material.

October 21: Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) petitions (Immigration) – Speaker Josephine Sorgwe, Director at BakerRipley - Houston

TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENT due Nov 2: Write a cover letter to USCIS for a VAWA petition pursuant to the fact pattern provided. You will need to create letterhead, cite to statutes, case law and regulations.

Week 10

October 26: Dealing with Stress and Compassion Fatigue – Speaker: Dr Ann Webb, Ph.D., J.D., LCSW-S

October 28: Estate Planning (Wills, Powers of Attorney, Authorizations for Nonparent Care of Child, etc) for your Family Immigration Client

TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENT due November 16: Draft the following documents: Statutory Durable Power of Attorney for an adult, Durable Power of Attorney for an adult, Healthcare Power of Attorney for Adult, Healthcare Power of Attorney for child, and an Authorization for Nonparent Care of Child based on facts provided.

Week 11

November 2: Domestic Violence - Texas Family Code: Protective Orders

November 4: Special Immigrant Juveniles (Family- SAPCR and Immigration) – Dalia Castillo-Granados – Director Children’s Immigration Law Academy (CILA)

Week 12

November 9: Naturalization

November 11: Working with clients: cultural sensitivity and the effects of trauma on the client

Week 13

November 16: Representation of Family Beneficiaries in Removal Proceedings and Mock Hearing

November 18: Professionalism; Managing Difficult and High Maintenance Clients (Immigration and Family) and Lawyer Mentoring

Week 14

November 23: Interviewing and Counseling: working with interpreters and understanding the importance of language access

November 25: No class: Thanksgiving Break

Week 15

November 30: Review – Last Class

FINAL EXAM: TBA – online (Law Center Exam Period is Dec 2-Dec 10)
