

**PLS 67 Course Outline as of Fall 2025****CATALOG INFORMATION**

Dept and Nbr: PLS 67 Title: FAMILY LAW

Full Title: Family Law

Last Reviewed: 2/24/2025

Units		Course Hours per Week		Nbr of Weeks	Course Hours Total	
Maximum	3.00	Lecture Scheduled	3.00	17.5	Lecture Scheduled	52.50
Minimum	3.00	Lab Scheduled	0	6	Lab Scheduled	0
		Contact DHR	0		Contact DHR	0
		Contact Total	3.00		Contact Total	52.50
		Non-contact DHR	0		Non-contact DHR	0

Total Out of Class Hours: 105.00

Total Student Learning Hours: 157.50

Title 5 Category: AA Degree Applicable

Grading: Grade Only

Repeatability: 00 - Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP

Also Listed As:

Formerly:

**Catalog Description:**

This course presents students with the fundamental common law and statutory concepts of family law with emphasis on the paralegal's role. Topics include formal and informal marriages, separation, divorce, annulment, marital property, the parent-child relationship, child custody and support, adoption, guardianship, domestic relations court procedures, public records research, and the paralegal's role in alternative dispute resolution/mediation processes. Ethical obligations, family law terminology and emerging computer applications in domestic relations practice are also presented.

**Prerequisites/Corequisites:**

Course Completion or Concurrent Enrollment in PLS 50

**Recommended Preparation:****Limits on Enrollment:****Schedule of Classes Information:**

Description: This course presents students with the fundamental common law and statutory concepts of family law with emphasis on the paralegal's role. Topics include formal and

informal marriages, separation, divorce, annulment, marital property, the parent-child relationship, child custody and support, adoption, guardianship, domestic relations court procedures, public records research, and the paralegal's role in alternative dispute resolution/mediation processes. Ethical obligations, family law terminology and emerging computer applications in domestic relations practice are also presented. (Grade Only)  
 Prerequisites/Corequisites: Course Completion or Concurrent Enrollment in PLS 50  
 Recommended:

Limits on Enrollment:

Transfer Credit: CSU;

Repeatability: Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP

## **ARTICULATION, MAJOR, and CERTIFICATION INFORMATION:**

<b>AS Degree:</b>	<b>Area</b>	Effective:	Inactive:
<b>CSU GE:</b>	<b>Transfer Area</b>	Effective:	Inactive:
<b>IGETC:</b>	<b>Transfer Area</b>	Effective:	Inactive:
<b>CSU Transfer:</b>	Transferable	Effective: Fall 2012	Inactive:
<b>UC Transfer:</b>		Effective:	Inactive:

**CID:**

**Certificate/Major Applicable:**

Major Applicable Course

## **COURSE CONTENT**

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate and apply knowledge of the procedures and processes of the family court in California.
2. Apply court rules particular to family law.
3. Define and properly use terminology relating to family law.
4. Develop checklists to insure accuracy in preparation of family court documents.
5. Draft documents commonly used in family law.

**Objectives:**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of common law and statutory family law concepts governing marriage, parent-child relationships, guardianships, and other matters controlled by the family court.
2. Locate, describe, and analyze print and electronic sources of law relating to family law.
3. Explain the ethical obligations of a paralegal relating to family law.
4. Demonstrate the unique personal communication skills needed to meet the emotional and legal needs of the client.
5. Define the paralegal's role in assisting in Alternative Dispute Resolution / Mediation / Collaborative Law processes.

**Topics and Scope:**

## I. Introduction to Family Law

### A. Family law practice

1. Scope
2. Adversarial versus collaborative process

### B. Interest of the government

1. Constitutional issues
2. State issues
3. Domestic relations court system

### C. Legal research methods in family law

1. Legal sources
  - a. Primary authority
  - b. Secondary authority
2. Non-legal sources

### D. Role of paralegal in family law practice

1. Interview work
2. Investigative work
3. Pro bono work

### E. Ethical considerations in family law practice

1. Unauthorized practice of law
2. Confidentiality
3. Conflict of interest
4. Attorney's fees
5. Communications with opposing side
6. Professional relationship with client
7. Paralegal's responsibility to client, court and supervising attorney
8. Features of jurisdiction's Code of Professional Responsibility
9. Grievance procedures

## II. Marital Relationships

### A. Marriage

1. History and definition of marriage
  - a. Ceremonial
  - b. Common law
  - c. Same sex unions or marriages
2. Presumptions and public policy considerations
  - a. Valid
  - b. Void
  - c. Voidable
3. Legal consequences of marriage
  - a. Breach of promise to marry
  - b. Mutual duty to support

### B. Premarital and cohabitation agreements

1. Legality and enforceability
2. Death and divorce considerations
3. Modification
4. Types
  - a. Uniform Premarital Agreement Act
    - i. Definitions
    - ii. Formalities
    - iii. Effect of marriage
    - iv. Amendment or revocation
    - v. Enforcement

- b. Marital property
  - i. Partition or exchange of community property
  - ii. Income or separate property
  - iii. Formalities
  - iv. Enforcement
- c. Separate property and community property conversions
  - i. Formalities
  - ii. Management of converted property
  - iii. Enforcement
  - iv. Rights of creditors
- d. Post-nuptial agreements
- e. Cohabitation agreements

### III. Breakdown of the Marital Relationship

#### A. Termination overview

1. Equity versus law
2. Issues
3. Religious considerations

#### B. Annulments

1. Definition
2. Purpose
3. Requirements
4. Procedure
5. Consequences
6. Other forms of relief
  - a. Separation
  - b. Alternative dispute resolution

#### C. Divorce

1. Definition--contested versus uncontested
2. Requirements
  - a. Common law grounds
  - b. Statutory grounds
3. Defenses to fault grounds
4. Property rights
5. Consequences
  - a. Personal issues
  - b. Financial issues
  - c. Tax issues

#### D. Trial practice and dissolution of marriage

1. Jurisdictional issues
2. Preparation of pleadings, service of process, discovery documents, temporary orders, divorce decrees, and orders
3. Preliminary hearing for interlocutory relief
4. Special relief matters, bifurcation, litigation fees and costs, collection of arrearages
5. Analysis of equitable distribution and alimony
6. Client considerations - interviewing techniques
7. Modification and appeals of divorce decrees

E. Ancillary issues such as wills, deeds, qualified domestic retainer orders, settlement agreements, and decrees

### IV. Post Divorce Enforcement

#### A. Property issues

1. Classifications
  - a. Marital property

- i. Community property state
      - ii. Non-community property state
    - b. Homesteads
      - i. Sale
      - ii. Conveyance
      - iii. Encumbrances
    - c. Inheritance
    - d. Retirement, pension, employment benefits and other plans
    - e. Insurance rights
  - 2. Valuation of property
  - 3. Division of liabilities
- B. Child issues
- 1. Custody
    - a. Child's best interest
    - b. Types of custody
      - i. Parental: joint custody or sole custody
      - ii. Non-parental: relative custody or non-relative custody
    - c. Agreements
      - i. Uniform Child Custody Act
      - ii. Private agreements
    - d. Litigation
      - i. Procedure
      - ii. Suit Affecting the Parent-Child Relationship
      - iii. Court Orders
      - vi. Additional parties
    - f. Guardian ad litem
    - g. Attorney ad litem
    - h. Court-appointed special advocate
    - i. Volunteer advocates
  - 2. Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA)
    - a. Statutory authority
    - b. Indian child's best interest and cultural consideration
    - c. Jurisdiction
    - d. Placement preferences
  - 3. Visitation
    - a. Parents
    - b. Step-parents
    - c. Grandparents
  - 4. Termination of parental rights
    - a. Grounds for involuntary termination
    - b. Procedures
    - c. Hearing and order
  - 5. Adoption
    - a. Common law and statutory basis
      - i. Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA)
      - ii. Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA)
    - b. Agency versus non-agency
    - c. Voluntary and involuntary termination
    - d. Artificial reproduction issues
    - e. Adoption of adult
  - 6. Paternity
    - a. Uniform Parentage Act

- b. Temporary orders
- c. Conservatorship, support and payments
- d. Acknowledgment or denial
- e. DNA testing
- f. Presumptions and burden of proof
- 7. General and medical support
  - a. Federal guidelines
    - i. Uniform Interstate Family Support Act
    - ii. Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act
    - iii. Other interstate, intrastate, and international support laws and procedures
  - b. State guidelines
  - c. Enforcement procedures
    - i. Liens
    - ii. Garnishment of wages
    - iii. Suspension of license
  - d. Modification
    - i. Managing conservatorship
    - ii. Possession or access to child
    - iii. Financial support
- 8. Child abuse
  - a. Child Abuse Central Registry
  - b. Reports of abuse or neglect
    - i. False reports
    - ii. Confidentiality
  - c. Abandoned children
  - d. Adversary hearing and notice
- C. Spousal support issues
  - 1. Alimony and equitable distribution
  - 2. Maintenance
  - 3. Modification
  - 4. Appeals
- V. Families in Crisis
  - A. Legal responses to domestic violence
    - 1. Protective orders
    - 2. Criminal prosecution
    - 3. Termination of divorce and custody rights
    - 4. Impact on children
  - B. Battered woman's syndrome
  - C. Review of placement
- VI. Changing Legal Status of Children
  - A. Child delinquency and dependency
    - 1. Juvenile court proceedings
    - 2. Liability of parents for conduct of child
  - B. Emancipation
- VII. Alternate Family Structures
  - A. Single parent
  - B. Step-families and blended families
  - C. Same-sex parents
  - D. Foster parents
- VIII. Surrogacy
  - A. Definition
  - B. State laws

## IX. Changing Roles of Women in Society

- A. Civil Rights Act, Title VII
- B. Abortion and reproductive rights
- C. Equal Pay Act
- D. Pregnancy Disability Act
- E. Family Leave Act
- F. Change of name

## X. Family Relations Issues

- A. Elder care and conservatorship proceedings
- B. Homelessness issues
- C. Offenses against the family
  - 1. Bigamy
  - 2. Sale or purchase of child

### Assignment:

1. Reading assignments
2. Homework assignments
3. Analysis of fact patterns
4. Participate in group discussions
5. Terminology assignments
6. Portfolio of examples of family law documents
7. Quizzes, midterm and final exam

### Methods of Evaluation/Basis of Grade:

**Writing:** Assessment tools that demonstrate writing skills and/or require students to select, organize and explain ideas in writing.

Analysis of fact patterns

Writing  
20 - 25%

**Problem Solving:** Assessment tools, other than exams, that demonstrate competence in computational or non-computational problem solving skills.

Homework and terminology assignments; group discussions

Problem solving  
20 - 25%

**Skill Demonstrations:** All skill-based and physical demonstrations used for assessment purposes including skill performance exams.

Portfolio

Skill Demonstrations  
20 - 25%

**Exams:** All forms of formal testing, other than skill performance exams.

Quizzes, midterm, final exam

Exams  
30 - 35%

**Other:** Includes any assessment tools that do not logically fit into the above categories.

Attendance and participation

Other Category  
5 - 10%

**Representative Textbooks and Materials:**

California Family Law for Paralegals. 9th ed. Waller, Marshall. Aspen Publishers. 2022

Instructor prepared materials