

SPRING 2024 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
WIDENER UNIVERSITY COMMONWEALTH LAW

LAW 530: ADMINISTRATIVE LAW (3 CREDITS)

This course studies the law governing administrative agencies, including executive departments, in the task of carrying out governmental programs. Topics include interrelations of legislative, executive and judicial agencies in development of public policy; decision-making processes and internal procedures of administrative agencies and legislative, executive and judicial controls on them.

LAW 788: ADVANCED TRIAL METHODS (2 CREDITS)

This course is designed to provide students interested in trial practice with an opportunity to study and participate in the various aspects of a trial. Students will develop a thorough understanding of each aspect of a trial, including jury selection, opening and closing statements, introduction of evidence and examination of witnesses. Case theory, courtroom ethics and professionalism will be discussed.

Pre-requisite: Trial Methods or ITAP

LAW 7017X: ASYLUM LAW (2 CREDITS)

This is an in depth course on the law of asylum and refugees; withholding of removal and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The course will examine both the United Nations Conventions and the implementing legislation in the United States. The course will be both a practical guide into how to present a fear based case as well as a study of the statute, regulations and case law addressing the major issues in this area of the law. Most of the reading material will be handouts and assigned reading of particular cases. In lieu of a final exam, the students will prepare a prehearing brief in which several issues will have to be addressed and country condition information will have to be assembled and applied.

LAW 738: BANKRUPTCY (3 CREDITS)

This course will address state law creditor collection remedies such as garnishment and execution, and state law priorities among competing creditors. After examining state law remedies and priorities, we will focus on the federal Bankruptcy Code. We will discuss elements common to all (business and consumer) bankruptcies, and the principal focus of the course will be Chapter 7 liquidations in the consumer context and Chapter 13 wage-earner payout plans. At the end of the course, we will discuss some issues particular to Chapter 11 business bankruptcies.

LAW 631: BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS (3 CREDITS)

A.J.D./LL.M survey course that analyzes the conduct of business in each of the principal forms of business organization, and the relative rights and liabilities of the members of such organizations and third persons. The course reviews the uniform partnership statutes, the Model Business Corporation Act, and the Delaware General Corporation Law, and considers the legal principles governing agency and partnership relationships as well as corporations. The course introduces the federal securities laws and the state statutes governing limited liability companies, limited partnerships and limited liability partnerships.

LAW 925: CENTRAL PA LAW CLINIC (2-6 CREDITS)

The Pennsylvania Civil Clinic is a one-semester client service clinical program offering an opportunity to study and to undertake actual cases in general civil litigation in the Pennsylvania courts on behalf of clients who are unable to afford legal services from traditional private sources. Clinical participants interview and counsel clients; frame legal issues and prepare for litigation; and participate in negotiations, non-judicial dispute resolution and litigation on behalf of clients before administrative agencies and state and federal trial courts. Students may also assist in appellate cases before state and federal courts. Clients are represented by clinical interns under the supervision of the Clinical Director.

Pre-requisites: Evidence & Professional Responsibility

LAW 926: CENTRAL PA LAW CLINIC LEADER (2 CREDITS)

The Pennsylvania Civil Clinic Leader is a one semester client service clinical program offered to selected students who have completed one semester in the Pennsylvania Civil Clinic. Students who are selected as Clinic Leader will continue to participate in the representation of actual clients in the general civil practice of the clinic. In addition, Clinic Leaders assist in the management of the Civil Clinic by ensuring that the materials used by the Clinic comply with applicable rules. The Clinic Leader also assists in supervising students by helping them in their research as well as their preparation for court proceedings. Clinic Leaders may also be asked to continue representation of clients from prior semesters or to work on special projects that may arise in the Civil Clinic from time to time.

Pre-requisites: Evidence, Professional Responsibility, and Pennsylvania Civil Clinic

LAW 504: CIVIL PROCEDURE II (3 CREDITS)

A continuation of Civil Procedure I, this course studies civil litigation procedure, with emphasis on modern federal practice. Topics include subject matter jurisdiction, personal jurisdiction, venue, joinder, the Erie doctrine, and related concepts.

LAW 803: CLINICAL EXTERNSHIPS (2-4 CREDITS)

This course provides an extern clinical assignment in the practice of law with cooperating agencies such as a district attorney, public defender; legal aid society, etc. A weekly classroom component is also part of the externship program.

Pre-requisite: Evidence

Co-requisite: Professional Responsibility

LAW 508: CONTRACTS II (3 CREDITS)

A continuation of Contracts I, this course studies the law governing contracts and contractual relationships. The course introduces the student to contract formation, performance, and nonperformance, and explores the role of contract law in a market society

LAW 505: CRIMINAL LAW (3 CREDITS)

This course studies the general principles that underlie statutory criminal liability, including a consideration of their judicial application in the context of selected offenses and defenses.

LAW 784: CRIMINAL PROCEDURE: ADJUDICATION (2 CREDITS)

This course surveys the criminal justice process from arrest through appeal. Constitutional provisions, statutes, rules of criminal procedure, and practice strategies concerning prosecutorial discretion, initial appearance, pre-trial release or detention, preliminary hearing, grand jury procedure, plea bargaining and selected trial and appellate issues are considered.

Pre-requisites: Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure: Investigation

LAW 506: CRIMINAL PROCEDURE: INVESTIGATION (3 CREDITS)

This course provides In-depth consideration of the Fourth Amendment's protection against unreasonable search and seizure, the Fifth Amendment's right against compulsory self-Incrimination, and the Sixth Amendment's right to counsel, all with particular emphasis on the judicial Interpretation of the application of these constitutional provision's within the context of police investigation of crime.

LAW 7005X: DEAL SKILLS: THE DOCUMENTS (1 CREDIT)

This class will introduce students to the legal processes and various documents commonly used to close a business deal, such as commitment letters, term sheets, “the deal” agreement, and promissory notes. The course will also familiarize students with the business and legal issues that an attorney must understand when drafting and negotiating documents for business deals. The class will use a large business loan closing for the basis of its discussion but the processes and documents are broadly applicable to mergers, acquisitions, real estate transactions, and other deals. Students are required to have read all of the assigned course materials prior to the first day of class.

LAW 798/799: DIRECTED RESEARCH (1-2 CREDITS)

Students may write research papers for credit under the supervision of a full-time member of the faculty. The faculty member must approve the subject.

Pre-requisite: Successful completion of one Seminar

LAW 832: EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION (2 CREDITS)

This course studies federal law governing discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, and disability. The course explores theories of discrimination and covers litigation under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, as well as selected topics under other employment discrimination and civil rights statutes.

LAW 831: ENVIRONMENTAL LAW (3 CREDITS)

This course surveys the federal and state statutes and regulatory programs which attempt to limit water pollution, air pollution, environmental degradation, species extinction, hazardous waste, and chemical regulation problems. The course will examine how and why these statutes and programs are structured the way that they are, how the laws work, and the extent to which our environmental laws achieve their goals.

LAW 636: FAMILY LAW (3 CREDITS)

This course considers state and constitutional issues relating to the regulation of sexual and family relationships. Among the areas that may be covered are defining what constitutes a family, entry into marriage, divorce, and its economic consequences (alimony, property distribution and child support) and child custody. The course draws on constitutional principles, statutes, and the common law to study the family in the legal system.

LAW 7009: FEDERAL CIVIL PRACTICE (2 CREDITS)

Most civil litigation resolves before a jury trial. The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure provide litigators with many tools to advance the interests of their clients before a case reaches a jury. Rule 56, governing summary judgment, is one of the most important tools in the civil litigator's toolbox. This class will not only discuss the rules and cases governing summary judgment but will also use a hypothetical civil case to provide students with the opportunity to prepare and "file" documents necessary to the summary judgment process.

LAW 610: FEDERAL INCOME TAX (3 CREDITS)

This course surveys and analyzes the federal system of income taxation. Topics include gross receipts, gross income, exclusions, gain-seeking and personal deductions, CREDITS, rates and tax accounting.

LAW 810: FIRST AMENDMENT (3 CREDITS)

This course focuses on constitutional rights involving speech, press, and religion. Rights of political participation, wartime limits on civil liberties, state action, associational freedoms, and constitutional and prudential limits on judicial powers are also potential topics.

Pre-requisite: Constitutional Law

LAW 690: FUNDAMENTALS OF THE BAR EXAM (2 CREDITS)

Fundamental of the Bar Exam is a pre-bar review skills-development course that uses bar examination materials to familiarize students with techniques for answering the multiple choice, essay, and performance test questions found on the bar examination. The course focuses on bar exam skills and is not a comprehensive review of the substantive law tested on the bar exam. Students will be required to work collaboratively in class and will have regular homework assignments to complete. This course is not a substitute for a commercial bar preparation course.

LAW 6035: GOVERNMENT LAW COLLOQUIUM (1 CREDIT)

This seminar will consider the special areas of law that are involved in litigation by or against a state or local agency. It will review such substantive areas of law as mandamus; statutory construction; when the existence of a statutory procedure precludes other forms of litigation, such as a declaratory judgment action; and a constitutional challenge to a state statute on procedural, as opposed to substantive grounds. The seminar will consider real life litigation, such as the pursuit of a zoning board appeal or a workers' compensation claim.

LAW 638: INSURANCE LAW (2 CREDITS)

Studies the law of the insurance enterprise including insurance marketing, theories of insurable interest, measures of recovery, subrogation, protected parties, nature of loss, warranties, representations, concealment, and rights at variance with policy provisions.

LAW 511: INTENSIVE LEGAL ANALYSIS (2 CREDITS)

This course provides students with the opportunity to develop and refine their legal reasoning and analysis skills. Topics include: identifying an individual's learning style and problem-solving skills, critical reading of legal authorities, simple and complex rule-based reasoning, and methods of deconstructing legal rules and organizing the analysis of new legal questions. Exam-style essays and "in-basket" projects are used to practice and reinforce analytical skills.

LAW 772: INTERSCHOLASTIC COMPETITION (1 CREDIT)

Students may earn one or two credits for participation in interscholastic moot court, trial advocacy and other competitions sanctioned by the law school as appropriate interscholastic competitions. The list of approved interscholastic competitions includes but is not limited to National Moot Court, Jessup International Moot Court, Douglas Moot Court, Patent Moot Court, Polsky Moot Court, American Trial Lawyers Association Competition, Texas Trial Lawyers Competition, American Bar Association Client Counseling Competition and like events.

LAW 849: INTERVIEWING AND COUNSELING (2 CREDITS)

This course develops the practical lawyering skills involved in client interviewing and counseling. Classroom time includes lecture/discussion and role playing/practical exercises. This is a course where you can become actively involved. You are expected to actively participate in the role playing and exercises to develop your skills in the practical application of talking with a potential or engaged client and counseling a potential or engaged client.

LAW 809: JUDICIAL EXTERNSHIP (2-4 CREDITS)

Students enrolled in the Judicial Externship Program are assigned to selected state and federal trial and appellate judges for a maximum of two semesters. Externs prepare legal memoranda, conduct legal research and perform duties normally assigned to a law clerk under the supervision of the assigned judge and the judge's graduate law clerk. The program is designed to enhance the student's writing and research skills, familiarize the student with court procedures, permit observation of court proceedings and enable the student to learn the operation of judicial chambers. Students will meet with the faculty supervisor for mid-semester and end-of-semester reviews. Students are required to keep a daily log and retain a copy of all written work produced for the court. Graded Pass/No Pass.

Pre-requisite: Evidence

Co-requisite: Professional Responsibility

LAW 770: LAW REVIEW BOARD (1-2 CREDITS)

Please contact Widener Law Review for more information.

LAW 763: LAW REVIEW STAFF (1 CREDIT)

Please contact Widener Law Review for more information.

LAW 510: LEGAL METHODS II (3 CREDITS)

This course expands on the analysis, writing and research skills introduced in Legal Methods I, and introduces new skills. Students will learn basic techniques of persuasive legal arguments, and will draft persuasive documents such as a trial memorandum and an appellate brief. Students will also learn how to research court rules, and will prepare and deliver an appellate oral argument.

LAW 512: LEGAL METHODS III - LEGISLATIVE DRAFTING (2 CREDITS)

The goals of this course are to provide the student with: insight into the dynamics of a legislative body; appreciation of the importance of legislative history for interpreting the meaning behind legislation; an understanding of and political constraints on legal legislative and regulatory drafting; and practical drafting experiences.

Pre-requisites: Legal Methods I & II

LAW 512: LEGAL METHODS III – WRITING FOR THE BAR (2 CREDITS)

This course helps jumpstart students' preparation for the essay and performance tests on the bar exam. In this course, students will enhance their legal writing, analytical, and organizational skills through intensive studying and writing practice. Students' legal and factual analytical reasoning skills and writing skills will be developed through multiple practice essay exams and performance tests. This course is designed to help students develop the skills needed to succeed on the bar exam and as newly admitted attorneys. This course is not a substitute for a bar preparation course. Students are encouraged to take this course in the year immediately preceding graduation.

LAW 7012X: MID PENN LEGAL SERVICES PRACTICUM (1 CREDIT)

Students participate in an externship placement in partnership with MidPenn Legal Services, the legal service provider for low-income clients in our region. The practicum will provide several opportunities to learn the law in the areas of public interest representation, interviewing and counseling experience with client contact, and working with clients in clinical settings both in Dauphin and Perry counties. Students will participate in the practicum as part of the current Clinical Externship program and will be required to comply with the requirements of that course.

LAWH 7006: MILITARY LAW (2 CREDITS)

This course surveys the military justice system of the United States. The course briefly covers the history of American military justice and introduces the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The course also examines the roles of commanders, lawyers, and judges in the system; substantive crimes; trial process and procedure; the appellate process; and current topics of interest.

LAW 6070X: MOOT COURT INTERSCHOLASTIC COMPETITION (1 CREDIT)

Please contact Moot Court Honor Society for more information.

LAW 889: NEGOTIATION (1 CREDIT)

This course provides an overview of negotiation theories and techniques. Through lectures and simulation exercises, students learn to identify their negotiating styles, to negotiate effectively and to use negotiation skills in the practice of law.

LAW 889: NEGOTIATION (1 CREDIT) LAW 741: PA CIVIL PRACTICE (2 CREDITS)

This course provides a general survey of civil practice and procedure in Pennsylvania state trial courts, based primarily on the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure and the Judicial Code. This is a skills class. The emphasis will be on a practical application of the relevant procedures, their interpretations through developing case law, and their function and importance in the litigation process. Trial strategies will also be a focus. Students will draft pleadings, motions, and trial documents. Time keeping and billing exercises will also be included. Students may have the opportunity to observe an arbitration or jury trial in the Court of Common Pleas Dauphin County.

LAW 7010: PRO BONO PRACTICE I: (2 CREDITS)

This class will cover basic law and skills that an attorney needs to handle pro bono referrals from Legal Services or Legal Aid. Students will study protection from abuse orders, child custody, child support, divorce proceedings, unemployment compensation hearings, landlord/tenant disputes, and expungements. Students will draft complaints and answers, conduct mock client interviews, and make oral arguments.

LAW 652: PRODUCTS LIABILITY (3 CREDITS)

This course studies the development of liability of the distributors (manufacturers, vendors and other suppliers) for harm caused by defective products. Emphasis is placed on the development and nature of theories of strict liability in tort, negligence, misrepresentation, and warranty liability under the UCC.

LAW 702: PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY (3 CREDITS)

This course examines the duties of lawyers toward clients, courts, and society. Ethical problems which confront the lawyer are raised and discussed in terms of the Model Rules of Professional Conduct, the Model Code of Professional Responsibility and case law. The areas covered include confidentiality, conflicts of interest, competence and unauthorized practice.

LAW 516: PROPERTY II (2 CREDITS)

A continuation of Property I, this course studies the basic elements of the law of real and personal property. Topics in personal property may include ownership and possession, finders' rights, bailment, bona fide purchasers, gifts, bank accounts, and accession. Topics involving real property include adverse possession, estates and future interests, marital interests, concurrent ownership, and landlord-tenant law. The course may also include other topics which are covered in more detail in upper level electives: nuisance law, zoning, constitutional limitations on public land use regulations, eminent domain, private land use restrictions (easements, licenses, servitudes), and real estate conveyancing and recording.

LAW 655: REMEDIES (3 CREDITS)

This course examines the various forms of relief available to prevailing parties in civil actions, primarily actions based in contract or tort. Thus, it covers damages, restitution, and equitable relief (specific performance and injunctions). The course also treats the use of the contempt power to enforce court orders.

LAW 646: SALES AND LEASES (3 CREDITS)

This course covers Articles 2 and 2A of the Uniform Commercial Code. Coverage generally includes all the stages of contracts for the sale and lease of goods from formation to breach and remedies. Documents of title (Article 7) and payment by means of letters of credit (Article 5) may also be covered. The course may also include comparisons and contrasts with the Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods.

LAW 600: SECURED TRANSACTIONS (3 CREDITS)

This course provides an introduction to the law governing contractually created interests in personal property used to secure payment or performance of obligations. The course involves a study of the creation, perfection, priority and enforcement of security interests in personal property under Article 9 of the Uniform Commercial Code. The course also includes an examination of relevant provisions of the Bankruptcy Code and some other state and federal statutes that affect security interests.

Prerequisite: Property I

LAW 7027: SEMINAR : PANDEMIC LEGAL ISSUES (2 CREDITS)

The COVID-19 Pandemic affected almost all aspects of life and raised novel as well as long-standing legal issues in controlling pandemics. Students will prepare a 20 -25 page paper and a 15 minute presentation (followed by a Q&A) on their particular topic. Examples of class discussions and paper topics regarding pandemic legal issues include, among other possibilities, the following: Public Health Law (vaccine and mask mandates, lockdowns); Health Care Rationing; Religious and Medical Exemptions; Business Powers to Regulate Employee Pandemic Related Issues; Free Speech and Disinformation; Immigration and Travel Restrictions; Intellectual Property and Vaccines; Product Liability and Vaccines; Regulation of the Supply Chain; Liability under Business Interruption Insurance for Pandemic Lockdown Closures; Historical Legal Approaches to Pandemics; Statutory Reforms to Prevent Future Pandemics.

LAW 950: SEMINAR: TAX POLICY (2 CREDITS)

This seminar will provide instruction in federal income tax research materials and methods and will explore the tax legislative process and tax policy analysis that drives the development of tax law. Students will be required to prepare answers to research interrogatories and, with individualized supervision, a major tax research paper.

LAW 909: SEMINAR: VOTING RIGHTS AND ELECTION LAW (2 CREDITS)

Though we often think of the electoral process as central to the shaping of law, the political process itself is governed by laws that affect the outcome of elections and, by extension, public policy. This course examines those foundational laws, whether they be constitutional or statutory. Topics include the right to vote; First Amendment rights of candidates, voters, political speakers, and parties; the Voting Rights Act's and the Constitution's constraints on the drawing of district lines; and the place of money in the electoral process.

Pre-requisite: Constitutional Law

LAW 881: SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT LAW (2 CREDITS)

Sports Law presents an in-depth study of the nature of professional sports leagues and associations, focusing predominantly upon the areas of contracts, antitrust and labor-management relations. Among the topics addressed are: the powers of league commissioners and the sources of authority and legal basis for league governance; contract negotiations and enforcement; the “per se” rule and “rule of reason” approaches to alleged violations of the antitrust laws, as well as pertinent exemptions from antitrust coverage; representation and unfair labor practice cases before the National Labor Relations Board; the development of collective bargaining in professional sports, including strikes, lockouts and various voluntary dispute resolution mechanisms; and an overview of the duties and responsibilities of an athlete’s agent.

LAW 800: STATE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW (2 CREDITS)

This course examines the practice of administrative law in the states with particular emphasis on Pennsylvania. This is a skills course. State administrative practice and/or litigation will be a major focus. One credit-hour of the course consists of professional skills training in administrative adjudication. The skills component is a simulation of a license revocation proceeding for an assisted living home. Some students will receive a report from an inspector, then prepare a rule to show cause why the license should not be revoked. Other students will prepare a defense. After pretrial motions, discovery, and a pretrial conference, students will try the case before an administrative law judge. In the substantive portion of the course, students will examine differences between state and federal administrative law. Students will be asked to do a short (8-10 pages) paper in which the student will examine one state agency (of the student's interest and choice) and explain in a general way its objectives, powers and method of operation. Students will also examine Pennsylvania's unique statutory administrative code and procedural regulations, which are different from the federal Administrative Procedure Act.

Pre-requisite: Administrative Law

LAW 7032X: STATE LEGISLATIVE HISTORY (1 CREDIT)

This course is designed to give students a practical instruction in how to conduct historical research on the development of state statutory and constitutional provisions. The course will provide students with a basic knowledge of how to assemble state legislative histories themselves by using databases and resources like LexisAdvance, Westlaw, HeinOnline, LLMC, HathiTrust, Google Books, and Google Scholar, as well as publicly available sources and databases. In-class lectures will involve simulations and interactive discussions and the outside assignments are practical, skills-based assessments. Students will learn how to trace the development of statutory and constitutional text over time—specifically, to see how text has changed and to ascertain legislative intent at different stages of history.

LAW 972: TAXATION OF BUSINESS ENTITIES (3 CREDITS)

This course surveys the federal income tax consequences associated with doing business as a partnership, limited liability company, corporation, and S corporation. It examines the tax issues arising upon the formation, operation, sale, and liquidation of the business entity. Students will spend significant time on statutory interpretation.

Pre-requisite: Federal Income Tax

LAW 520: TORTS II (3 CREDITS)

A continuation of Torts I, this course examines and analyzes the general theories of tort liability for injuries to persons or property: intentional misconduct, negligence, and strict liability. The course may also introduce principles and theories of products liability. Defenses to all theories of liability are also covered.

LAW 519: TORTS I (2 CREDITS)

This course examines and analyzes the general theories of tort liability for injuries to persons or property: intentional misconduct, negligence, and strict liability. The course may also introduce principles and theories of products liability. Defenses to all theories of liability are also covered.

LAW 7003: VITA (1 credit)

This course offers students the opportunity to provide federal and state tax preparation to clients. Students get training and certification by the IRS after satisfactorily completing an open book exam. Depending on their level of certification, they are taught to correctly identify filing status, and to prepare returns with wages, tips, interest, dividends, unearned income, social security and retirement income, and self-employed income for Schedule C-EZ. While VITA volunteers are not required to train to fill out Schedules C, D, and E, certain sites may be able to help with such returns. Students start by talking to the client and finding out what his or her particular situation is. This helps the student develop interview skills while providing the taxpayer with the appropriate services for his or her needs.

LAW 834: WILLS & TRUSTS (4 CREDITS)

The course covers in testate succession; testamentary capacity; execution, revocation and component parts of wills; interpretation of wills; constructive trusts; will substitutes; creation and interpretation of inter vivos and testamentary trusts; future interests; the Rule Against Perpetuities; and ethical and practical considerations in drafting wills and trusts. The course may cover charitable trusts; powers of appointment; fiduciary responsibility; administration of trusts and estates; introduction to estate and gift tax law.