

Introduction to U.S. Law JRM 5352

Academic Term: Fall 2025

Credit Hours: 2

Name: Professor Kristen V. Hardy, J.D.

Email Address: k.hardy@law.ufl.edu. I will do my best to respond to you within 24 hours.

Synchronous Class Meeting: The class will meet for synchronous live meetings 7 p.m. - 8 p.m. on:

- October 13, 2025
- October 20, 2025
- October 27, 2025
- November 3, 2025
- November 10, 2025
- November 17, 2025
- November 24, 2025
- December 1, 2025
- December 8, 2025

Access the Zoom link through our Canvas page.

Virtual Office Hours: Monday, 8 p.m. – 9 p.m. and by appointment. To schedule, please submit a request via my calendar: [Book time with Hardy, Kristen V.](#)

Course Description, Prerequisites, and Learning Objectives

Welcome to *Intro to U.S. Law*! This document provides an overview of the course and its learning objectives, university policies, and a topical outline that details our work together over the six weeks of this course.

Course Description: This course will provide students an overview of U.S. Law. This course is not meant to offer an in-depth study of any one area; instead, the goal of the course is to offer a comprehensive overview of many different areas of American law. This course is not a substitute for any juris doctorate level course and does not prepare students for taking any portion of the bar exam.

Course Prerequisites/Co-Requisites: None

Learning Objectives: By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Explain the history and structure of the U.S. legal system (including federalism and the dual court system).
2. Describe the U.S. Constitution, its limits and powers, and key concepts of Constitutional law.
3. Summarize the function of U.S. Federal Courts in the area of common law reasoning and statutory interpretation.
4. Explain foundational concepts of public law, including criminal law, civil rights and civil liberties.
5. Identify basic principles of private law, including torts and contracts.
6. Read and digest judicial opinions and statutes.

Textbooks and Materials

Required Course Textbook(s):

1. Scheb, J.M., et al. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEM (6th Edition), ISBN # 978-1-5438-5821-1, Aspen Publishing.
2. Supplemental Material Posted to Canvas.

Recommended Reference Book

Bryan A. Garner, *Redbook: A Manual on Legal Style* (4th ed. 2018)

Course Expectations

Course Modules

This is a fully online course; you must log in to Canvas with your Gatorlink username and password to access all materials and assignments. The course is organized into modules with due dates. Each module component must be completed before the next component unlocks. All of the modules will be available at once, so you can work through them at your own pace.

Time Commitment & Student Workload Expectations

Students should expect to spend approximately 24 hours per week per course watching lectures, reading, working on assignments and projects, and engaging in discussions.

Communication

Changes in class meeting times or assignments may be necessary during the semester, and you will be notified of the changes as early as possible. You are responsible for checking your e-mail and the course website daily for changes in meeting times or assignments. Further, you are responsible for complying with announcements regarding revisions to the content of this course.

Attendance Policy

Your timely module completion will serve as a record of your class attendance. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies. [Click here to read the law school's attendance policies](#) for information on absences, religious holidays, illness, and the twelve-day rule. Excused absences must be consistent with university policies and require appropriate documentation.

Late Assignment Policy

You must turn in your written assignments (including homework) via the course website by the given deadline. Computer problems, including e-mail or Canvas problems, should be foreseen and are not grounds for an extension. Late assignments will not be accepted unless it is a [University excused absence](#), as stated in the attendance policies.

Course Grading Explanation

In this course, a student's grade will be based on the following:

25 points	5 points	Unit 1 Assignments	Due: See Canvas
	5 points	Unit 2 Assignments	
	5 points	Unit 3 Assignments	
	5 points	Unit 4 Assignments	
	5 points	Unit 5 Assignments	
20 points		Week 2 Judicial Opinion Research Assignment	Due: Nov. 7
55 points		Final Exam	Due: Dec. 12
100 points		TOTAL	

UF Law Standard Syllabus Policies

Other information about UF Levin College of Law policies, including compliance with the UF Honor Code, Grading, Accommodations, Class Recordings, and Course Evaluations can be found at this link:

<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/427635/files/74674656?wrap=1>.

Student Support

Student Support

Any student who has difficulty accessing sufficient food, lacks a safe place to live, or who is experiencing any other personal hardship, is encouraged to contact the Office of Student Affairs at the phone number or email address that appears below. If you are comfortable doing so, you may also notify me so that I can direct you to further resources.

Counseling and Psychological Services

Many students at University of Florida Levin College of Law face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional health. The law school and Gainesville community offer a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings.

You can reach the law school's mental health counselor, **Ritzzy Ettinger** at email rettinger@ufl.edu or call **352-273-0620**.

You can also reach out to the following entities:

UF Counseling & Wellness Center/Gator-2-Gator
401 Peabody Hall
Gainesville, FL
Phone: 352-392-1575
Website: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/services/crisis/>

UF Crisis Hotline (24 hours/7 days/week)
Phone: 352-392-1575

Alachua County Crisis Center
Phone: 352-264-6789
Website: <https://www.alachuacounty.us/Depts/CSS/CrisisCenter/Pages/CrisisCenter.aspx>

University of Florida Levin College of Law
The Office of Student Affairs
Phone: 352-273-0620
Email: student.svc@law.ufl.edu

University of Florida * “U Matter, We Care”
Phone: 352-294-CARE (2273)
Email: umatter@ufl.edu
Website: <https://umatter.ufl.edu>

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Course Outline

This course is organized into the following five units:

- Unit 1: Source and Structure of the U.S. Legal System
- Unit 2: U.S. Federal Courts in Action - Common Law Reasoning and the Doctrine of Stare Decisis
- Unit 3: Public Law
- Unit 4: Private Law
- Unit 5: The Legal Process

We will cover this material over a span of nine weeks:

Week 1: Source and Structure of the U.S. Legal System

Unit 1: Source and Structure of the U.S. Legal System

Week 2: Common Law Reasoning and the Doctrine of Stare Decisis

Unit 2: Federal Courts in Action

Constitutional Law

Unit 3: Public Law

Week 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Unit 3: Public Law

Week 4: Criminal Law

Unit 3: Public Law

Week 5: Torts

Unit 4: Private Law

Week 6: Property Law

Unit 4: Private Law

Contracts

Unit 4: Private Law

Week 7: Criminal Procedure

Unit 5: The Legal Process

Week 8: Civil Procedure and The Appellate Process

Unit 5: The Legal Process

Week 9: Final Exam