Steve Maxwell

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Fridays 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM

**I. Course Overview**

**A. Purpose**

“Foundations in Law” is not a substantive law course. Its purpose is to provide students with the foundational skills necessary for success in law school and on the bar exam.

**B. Materials**

**Canvas**

To teach the legal skills on which the course is focused, students work with legal topics relating to Real Property and Civil Procedure. The electronic textbook containing this material is posted in the Canvas page for the course. In addition, students read other assigned materials posted in Canvas.

**Kaptest**

Students will also use Kaptest to access the substantive lectures on Real Property and Civil Procedure. Some graded essays will be submitted to both Canvas and Kaptest. Students will receive written directions in Canvas directing them to submit to both platforms when required.

**C. Learning Outcomes**

Students will work with course materials designed to help them to improve their work in law school courses and to improve their process for preparing for the bar exam. They will regularly practice writing responses to essay exam questions. They will be introduced to information that will help them to understand how to improve the learning process and their performance in performing tasks required of law students and practitioners alike.

The following are student learning outcomes which result from diligent preparation and regular class attendance:

* Articulate and objectively assess their current learning and class-preparation processes and to recognize their existing skills and opportunities for improvement.
* Learn techniques designed for students with a variety of learning styles to improve the following:

(a) Reading comprehension.

(b) Retention of learned information.

(c) Analysis and synthesis of legal topics.

(d) The ability to analyze a legal topic in an orderly and systematic manner.

* Present a legal argument clearly and effectively using tried organizational techniques.
* Read closely and proactively (rather than passively and inattentively) to bring case law, statutes, and other primary source materials into focus.
* Create study aids designed to fit the student’s individual learning style.
* Manage stress and time while preparing for and taking exams (including the Bar Exam).
* Identify habits that have interfered in the past with the student’s performance and replace them with more effective practices.
* Internalize a continuing commitment to learning and applying the principles presented in this course and mastering the techniques introduced.
* Adopt an ongoing commitment to objective self-assessment, application of useful strategies and techniques, and vigilance against beliefs and practices/habits that have undermined the student’s success in the past.

**D. Office Hours**

In accordance with law school policy, office hours are exclusively online. The instructor will be available in his personal Zoom meeting room during office hours. Appointments are not required, but you may sign up for a specific time in Canvas. If the instructor is not present during office hours, please text the instructor. The meeting room number is also the instructor’s cell phone number.

Office hours: Fridays, 10AM – 12PM.

Location: Zoom Meeting Room <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/3215446089>

The instructor is also available for appointments outside of office hours. Students may contact the instructor directly to schedule a mutually convenient time.

**II. Overview of Written Assignments**

Graded work must be timely completed and timely submitted as directed to Kaplan or to Canvas.

NOTE: Per law school policy, this course will be graded on a curve. The curve will not be applied until the end of the semester, after completion and grading of all work and in determining your final grade. Thus, the points received for each graded eassay represent your raw score only.

**A. Graded Essays**

**NOTE:** Some projects and in-class assignments are graded. These assignments include the following:

**(1) Graded Essays Other than the Final Exam**. To allow students to track their progress, students are from time to time assigned essays. Some of these essays will be designated as graded essay assignments. Some graded essays are prepared during class under test conditions, while others are assigned for homework.

**(2) Final Graded Exam Essay Question.** The final graded exam consists of timed essay questions intended to demonstrate the student’s mastery of the assigned materials.

**(3) Other Graded Work as specified by the instructor.** The instructor at his option may assign supplementary **graded** exercises or quizzes designed to supplement a related assignment by reinforcing key principles or giving them preliminary practice applying a technique or principle. If such a supplementary graded assignment is not announced in the syllabus, the instructor may announce it in the immediately preceding class or in the posted instructions for the upcoming assignment.

**B. Non-Graded Work**

**NOTE:** Ungraded assignments affect your final grade. Failure to timely complete and submit any ungraded assigned exercise as directed may result (at the instructor’s discretion based on the circumstances) in the lowering of the student’s final course grade by one grade level.

**(1) Self-Assessments**. Accurate self-assessment is critical in building the skills taught in this course. Students will be provided with self-assessment worksheets that allow them to evaluate and track their skill proficiencies. Students will be asked to complete self-assessments throughout the course.

**(2) Ungraded in-class written assignments required by the instructor.** The instructor at his option may assign supplementary **ungraded** exercises or quizzes designed to supplement a related assignment by reinforcing key principles or giving them preliminary practice applying a technique or principle. If such a supplementary graded assignment is not announced in the syllabus, the instructor may announce it in the immediately preceding class or in the posted instructions for the upcoming assignment.

**III. Attendance Requirements and Graded Participation**

Each class consists of two class periods. Because this course requires students to learn and practice new skills, participation in class is crucial and has a direct bearing on your final grade. Students often work together on in-class discussion or assignments; a student’s failure to attend and contribute is therefore a serious matter.

Students are expected to attend every class period. If a student without good cause\* misses more than two class periods, the student’s (in the instructor’s discretion and depending on the circumstances) final grade may be lowered as much as one grade level for each missed class period.

There is a new student-initiated attendance protocol. It is the student’s responsibility to be counted present. A teaching assistant (TA) will be present to assist students and the instructor. The TA will be given the same respect due the instructor.

Students participating remotely must be on video in order to be counted as in attendance, and must be prepared to participate in class discussion on the same terms as students in the classroom.

\*Students who are entitled to miss class for a religious holiday should notify the instructor in advance.

**IV. Use of Electronic Devices**

Cell phones are generally not permitted. They should be kept out of sight and silent.

Laptops are permitted as directed by the instructor. Use of laptops for internet browsing or other purposes will be noted by the instructor as failure to participate during that class period. If the instructor directs, laptops must be put away.

**V. Determination of Final Grade**

This class is a graded course. Because of the nature of the assignments, it is not blind-graded.

Per law school policy, this class will be graded on a curve. The weighted components for determining your final **raw grade** are listed below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Graded Essays | 60% |
| Self-Assessments and Other Graded Work | 20% |
| Final Exam | 20% |

The curve will not be applied until the end of the semester, after completion and grading of all work. Thus, any grades you receive on the graded assignments are raw scores to which the curve has not been applied.

Your other course work and participation will determine what adjustments (such as a bump up or down) apply to your raw grade. Your final grade is your raw grade adjusted for your participation and timely and satisfactory submission of ungraded work. Compliance with Covid-19 policies may be considered by the instructor when adjusting grades, as well as grounds to dismiss a student from the course. Safety requires our cooperation.

**VI. Class Recordings**

The instructor will not make class recordings generally available to ensure active attendance and participation in class.  See Dean Inman for access to recordings if you have an ADA accommodation or are required to miss class because of illness.

**VII. Disclosures Regarding UF Policies**

**A. College of Law Grade Policy** (Final Grades)

Grades for this course will be in compliance with the College of Law’s posted grading policy, including the mandatory mean and grade distributions. Final letter grades for the course are determined in accordance with the following point equivalency:

Letter Grade Point Equivalent

A (Excellent) 4.00

A- 3.67

B+ 3.33

B (Average) 3.00

B- 2.67

C+ 2.33

C (Below average) 2.00

C- 1.67

D+ 1.33

D (Poor) 1.00

D- 0.67

E (Failure) 0.00

**B. University and College of Law Policy on Grade Points**

Information on the University policy as to assigning grade points is available at: <http://catalog>.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

Information on current College of Law grading policies for assigning grade points can be found at: [https://www.law.ufl.edu/lifeat-uf-law/office-of-student-affairs/current%20students/academic-policies](https://www.law.ufl.edu/life-at-uf-law/office-of-student-affairs/current%20students/academic-policies) and below:

**C. Accommodations**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to Student Affairs (Dean Rachel Inman) when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**D. Course Evaluations**

“Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.”](https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.%E2%80%9D)

**E. UF Honesty Policy**

UF students are bound by the Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel.

For the University Honor Code, please see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

**F. COVID-19 Policies**

We will have face-to-face instructional sessions to accomplish the student learning objectives of this course. In response to COVID-19, the following policies and requirements are in place to maintain your learning environment and to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions:

* You are required to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings. Following and enforcing these policies and requirements are all of our responsibility. Failure to do so will lead to a report to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. You also will no longer be permitted on the UF Law campus. Finally, Dean Inman will also report your noncompliance to the relevant state board of bar examiners.
* This course has been assigned a physical classroom with enough capacity to maintain physical distancing (6 feet between individuals) requirements. Please utilize designated seats and maintain appropriate spacing between students. Please do not move desks or stations.
* Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.
* Follow your TA’s guidance on how to enter and exit the classroom.  Practice physical distancing to the extent possible when entering and exiting the classroom.
* If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>), please do not come to campus or, if you are already on campus, please immediately leave campus. Please use the UF Health screening system and follow the instructions about when you are able to return to campus. <https://coronavirus.ufhealth.org/screen-test-protect/covid-19-exposure-and-symptoms-who-do-i-call-if/>.
* Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work. <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>.

**G. Prohibition on Student Recording, Photography, and Social Media Posting:**

Students may not take, circulate, or post photos or videos of classroom discussions, whether they are in-person, hybrid, or completely online.  Students failing to follow this rule will be referred to the College of Law Honor Code Council and the university’s Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

**NOTICE: CLASS PREPARATION WORKLOAD:**

ABA Standard 310 requires that students devote 120 minutes to out-of-class preparation for every “classroom hour” of in-class instruction. Foundations in Law has 2 “classroom hours” of instruction each week, requiring at least 4 hours of preparation outside of class.

Because the course includes a wide variety of skills-practice and other exercises, you should spend the bulk of your time outside of class on cultivating the techniques we discuss in class. When combined with your completion of the self-assessments, each activity spent outside of class should help reinforce memorization and legal rule application skills. The course is designed to help you improve your law school performance as well, so be liberal with your time investment. Always look to apply what you learn here in your other classes.

**Summary of Assignments\***

\*The instructor reserves the right to modify a syllabus assignment or to announce a graded in-class or out-of-class assignment by announcement in the preceding class period (and/or by posting the changed assignment).

**COURSE SCHEDULE\***

\*The detailed weekly agenda will be posted to Canvas each week.

Week 1 August 28th —Orientation, Self-Assessment

Week 2 September 4th —The Science of Learning & Introduction to IRAC

Week 3 September 11th —Content Organization & Memorization

Week 4 September 18th—Personality & Learning

Week 5 September 25th—Reading Comprehension & IRAC

Week 6 October 9th—Rule Statements

Week 7 October 16th—Timed Essays

Week 8 October 23rd—Analysis & Reasoning

Week 9 October 30th—Writing Principles & Study Tools

Week 10 November 6th—Assessing IRAC & Legal Analysis

Week 11 November 13th—Strategic Test-Taking

Week 12 November 20th—Final Exam

Week 13 November 30th—Anxiety Management & Exam Preparation