Mary K. Wimsett

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Adoption Law

Wednesdays, 4-6 p.m.

OFFICE HOURS

By appointment in HH 323. Please email me to schedule. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to email or request a meeting and we can meet by phone, zoom or in-person if feasible.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course will involve an exploration of the history of the American law of adoption, adoption procedures and the fundamental legal principles of adoption, covering cases, statutes and constitutional issues.

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

1) Describe the common law and statutory foundations of adoption and their application to jurisdiction and venue in the state and federal courts.

2) Demonstrate an understanding of the procedural rules and statues that govern the processes of adoption.

3) Understand and explain the complex ethical issues involved in the practice of adoptions.

4) Understand and identify the more complicated legal issues in adoptions such as paternity, grounds for termination of parental rights, ICWA and ICPC.

The goal of this class is to help the student think critically about the law governing adoptions. As a class, we will explore broad themes, interpret cases and statutes, and identify complex issues.

GRADES & EVALUATION

Students will be evaluated on class preparation and participation. Each student must complete a final examination, which will constitute 90% of your final grade. Grades will be awarded pursuant to the law school grading policy, <https://www.law.ufl.edu/life-at-uf-law/office-of-student-affairs/current-students/uf-law-student-handbook-and-academic-policies>. Participation in class will constitute 10% of your final grade.

PARTICIPATION

Agreement, disagreement, intelligent debate and thoughtful argument are appreciated and encouraged. Adoptions often have an emotional aspect and all students will be required to be cognizant of being polite and respectful to their peers. As long as you are present and prepared, you will receive credit for class participation. It is the quality, not the quantity, of your contribution that will be considered.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Class attendance is mandatory. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet during class. You may not sign for anyone except yourself. If you are more than fifteen minutes late, you will be considered absent. I will allow two unexcused absences per semester. If it should be necessary for you to miss more than two classes, you must explain the reasons for each additional absence. If you know in advance that you have to miss a class, please make arrangements with me in advance. You will have no more than seven days after the time of the unanticipated occurrence to bring the reasons for your absence to my attention, provided however, that I will not accept any excuses offered after our last session of the semester. Any unexcused absence that exceeds the allowance will lower your grade by one level. For example, one additional unexcused absence will lower a B to a B- or a C+ to a C.

COURSE MATERIALS

Suggested text book: Adoption Law and Practice, Joan Heifetz Hollinger, LexisNexis 2021. I recognize this book is expensive but it is an invaluable resource for anyone planning to practice in this area of law and I highly recommend the investment. On the first day of class we will discuss various options.

Chapter 63 of Florida Statutes.

Additional materials will be distributed throughout the semester.

PREPARATION

Adequate preparation includes reading and digesting any assigned materials prior to class. You should expect to spend at least two hours preparing for every one hour of class (four hours of reading per week).

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Adoptions are often the focus of interest in the media and public discourse. If you wish to share any materials with the class, please send to me in an email and I will consider sharing with the class. If you submit a material that I discuss in class, it will enhance your participation grade in the course.

ACCOMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-395-8565) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. <https://drc.dso.ufl.edu/>

DIVERSITY POLICY

We celebrate differences in culture, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, life choice, and physical and mental abilities. We strive to create a safe space where each person can fully self-express and feel supported and safe physically, socially and personally. The expectation is that we will all be respectful of the humanism in all.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

The Florida Board of Education and state law govern university policy regarding observance of religious holidays. The following guidelines apply:

Students, upon prior notifications to their instructors, shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith. Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence. Students shall not be penalized due to absence or from class or other scheduled academic activity because of religious observances. If a faculty member is informed or is aware that a significant number of students are likely to be absent from class because of a religious observance, the faculty should not schedule a major exam or other academic event at that time.

A student who is to be excused from class for a religious observance is not required to provide a second party certification of the reason for the absence. Furthermore, a student who believes that he or she has been unreasonably denied an education benefit due to religious beliefs or practices may seek redress through the student grievance procedure.

ONLINE COURSE EVALUATIONS Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will receive notice of the specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/

PROFESSIONALISM

Students are expected to behave in a respectful and professional manner at all times. Any unprofessional conduct that is in any way disrespectful to other students, disruptive, distracting or has a negative effect on the classroom atmosphere is prohibited. Any unprofessional conduct will be handled on a case by case basis. Such conduct may result in removal from the course or a grade reduction.

COURSE ETHICS 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. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with your professor. The student honor code can be located at https: //www. dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct/

FINAL EXAM DELAY The final exam may only be continued for one of the acceptable reasons under the multiple exam policy or illness as approved by the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: 352-392-1575; and the University Police Department: 352-392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS): Student Health Care Center: 352-392-1161.

University Police Department: 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).  <http://www.polic.ufl.edu/>

CLASS TOPICS/ASSIGNMENTS Below is a list of class topics and initial assignments. This information will be supplemented and updated at least two week prior to the date of each class.

Please note this schedule may change as we proceed in our semester or a guest lecturer needs accommodations.

**1.19.22 INTRODUCTION**

Reading: suggested text, pages1-1 through 1-14; Review Florida Statute Chapter 63. We will review this Chapter in detail throughout the semester. I suggest printing it and placing it in a binder that you can add to throughout the semester. For the first class, please review the statute generally so you are familiar with the layout, terms and concepts.

**1.26.22 SUITABILITY OF ADOPTIVE PARENTS /WHO MAY ADOPT, WHO MAY BE ADOPTED**

Reading: suggested text pages 3-1 through 3-30; 3-40 through 3-70; In re: Matter of Adoption of X.X.G., 45 So.3d 79, In re K.A.G., 152 So.3d 1272, R.L. and J.M., 147 So.3d 1054.

\*\*Guest Lecturer, Amy Imber, Founder and Owner of Connecting Hearts

**2.2.22 CONSENT, REVOCATION OF CONSENT, TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS, RIGHT TO COUNSEL, BURDEN OF PROOF, PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS, STATUTE OF REPOSE**

Reading: suggested text 2-1 through 2-20; 2-91 through 2-112; W.T. v. DCF, 846 So.2d 1278, 188 So.3d 920, Heart of Adoptions v. JA, 963 So.2d 189, Doe, 543 So.2d 741, JCJ, 989 So.2d 32; OAH v. RLA, 712 So.2d 4; J.B. v. DCF, 170 So.3d 780; Florida Statute 39.806.

**2.9.22 JURISDICTION, VENUE, UCCJEA, CHOICE OF LAW**

Reading: suggested text 4-119 through 4-156. Brookshire v. Blackwell, 682 SE2d 295, CLW, 467 So.2d 1106, Balestrieri, 622 So.2d 561, Baby Boy D, 769 A.2d 508, JDS 893 P.2nd 732, S.J. and I.J. v. W.L. and L.L., 755 So.2d 753, Makaros v. Chiechocki, 159 So.3d 957.

\*\*Guest Lecturer (9 am-10am): Jeanne Tate, Esq., The Law Office of Jeanne Tate

**2.16.22 PUTATIVE FATHER REGISTRY AND LEGAL FATHERS**

Reading: suggested text 2-20 through 2-91. S.D. v. A.G., 764 So.2d 807, D.S. v. J.L. and Miracles Adoption Agency, Inc., 18 So.3d 1103, HRS v. Privette, 617 So.2d 305, A.D.A. and M.J.L. v. D.M.F., 204 So3d 523, K.H. v. CHS, 120 So.3d 104.

**2.23.22 ICPC/INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTIONS**

Reading: suggested text 3A-1 through 3A-35; 10-1 through 10-35.

\*\*Guest Lecturer: Steve Pennypacker, CEO of Partnership for Strong Families

**3.2.22 ETHICAL ISSUES IN ADOPTION, ADOPTION ENTITY DUTIES, SUROGACY, PRE-PLANNED ADOPTION, SAFE HAVEN, DISRUPTION**

Reading: suggested text 7-1 through 7-114; Florida Bar v. Joyce Dove, 985 So.2d 1001; Florida Statute 383.50, 383.51

**3.9.22 Spring Break**

**3.16.22 ICWA**

Reading: suggested text 15-1 through 15-108

\*\*Guest Lecturer: Jay McCarthy, McCarthy Weston

**3.23.22 LIVING EXPENSES, FEES, ADOPTION TAX CREDIT, SPECIAL NEEDS ISSUES, ADOPTION SUBSIDY**

Reading: suggested text 9-1 through 9-48; Florida Statute 409.166; In re adoption of a child by I.T. and K.T., 397 A2d 341; Brod, 522 So.2d 973; Home at Last Agency, Inc. v. J.L.C-W and R.C.C.-W, 98 So.3d 699.

**3.30.22 ADULT, RELATIVE, STEPPARENT ADOPTIONS/PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE ADOPTION/CUSTODY ALTERNATIVES TO ADOPTION (GUARDIANSHIP, TEMPORARY CUSTODY)/INTERVENTIONS**

Reading: TBD

\*\*Guest Lecturer: Sara Goldfarb, Statewide Guardian ad Litem Program

**4.6.22 INTERVIEW EXERCISE**

\*\*Guest lecturer: Judge Ferrero

**4.13.22 CONFIDENTIALITY, PRIVACY, ACCESS TO RECORDS, OPEN ADOPTION, POST ADOPTION CONTACT**

Reading: suggested text 13A-1 through 13-49; 13B-1 through 13B-69.

\*\*Guest lecturer: Birth mother panel

**4.20.22 REVIEW FOR FINAL EXAM, Q&A, EVALUATIONS**