

PELLISSIPPI STATE TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
MASTER SYLLABUS

**FAMILY LAW  
LAW 2110**

**Class Hours: 3.0**

**Credit Hours: 3.0**

**Laboratory Hours: 0.0**

**Date Revised: Spring  
03**

NOTE: This course is not designed for transfer credit.

**Catalog Course Description:**

A study of substantive and procedural law relating to divorce, custody, support and adoption and the assistant's role in domestic cases.

**Entry Level Standards:**

College-level competencies in logic, reading, and English are required.

**Prerequisites:**

LAW 1000

**Corequisite:**

LAW 1060

**Textbook(s) and Other Course Materials:**

Luppino, Grace A. & Justine FitzGerald Milller, *Family Law & Practice: The Paralegal's Guide*, (Prentice Hall Publishing, 2002)  
*Tennessee Code Annotated, Vol. 6A and Supplement* (Michie/Lexis-Nexis, 2001)

**I. Week/Unit/Topic Basis:**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>
1	Introduction to Family Law Practice (3.0 hours)
2	The Roots and Traditions of American Family Law: the development of rules to govern the rights and responsibilities of spouses and other family members (3.0 hours)
3	Ethics in Family Law: statutes regulating the unauthorized practice of law and the rules of ethics (1.5 hour); principles regulating paralegal conduct (1.5 hour)
4	Prenuptial Agreements, Cohabitation, Same-Sex Marriage (1.5 hour); Marriage: contracts that determine respective rights upon dissolution of the relationship (1.5 hour)
5	Alimony: spousal support after marital dissolution (3.0 hours)
6	Property and Debt Distribution: equitable division (1.5 hour); what's mine is mine, what's yours is mine...(1.5 hour)
7	Child Custody, Visitation, and Rights of Third Parties: best interest of child (1.5 hour); tender years (.5 hour); joint custody (1.0 hour)
8	Child Support: determining each parent's obligation for child support (1.5 hour);

- modification (.75 hour); enforcement (.75 hour)
- 9 The Client Interview: professionalism (1.0 hour); mock interviews (2.0 hours)
- 10 Initial and Responsive Pleadings: statutory pleading (3.0 hours)
- 11 Pendente Lite Motions and Orders: support until the final order (3.0 hours)
- 12 The Discovery Process in Family Law (3.0 hours)
- 13 Separation Agreements: advantages and disadvantages (1.0 hour); The Divorce Trial: uncontested v. contested (1.5 hour); paralegal's role at trial (.5 hour)
- 14 Postjudgment Divorce Matters: modification (1.0 hour), relocation (.75 hour), enforcement (.75 hour), kidnapping (.5 hour)
- 15 State Intervention in Family Matters: neglect and abuse (1.0 hour) termination of parental rights (1.0 hour); adoption (1.0 hour)
- 16 Final Examination

## II. Course Objectives\*:

- A. Demonstrate a complete and thorough understanding of legal ethics. I, III, V
- B. Identify and become familiar with the basic terminology of domestic law. I, II, IV
- C. Understand the nature of the role and responsibilities of legal assistants within the area of domestic law. I, II, III, IV, V
- D. Demonstrate a complete and thorough understanding of marriage prerequisites. I, II
- E. Demonstrate an adequate understanding of the basic concepts of adoption. I, II, III
- F. Demonstrate an adequate understanding of the basic concepts of child custody decisions. I, II, III
- G. Demonstrate an adequate understanding of the differences between irreconcilable differences divorce and divorce on grounds. I, II, III, IV, V
- H. Understand how to compute child support. I, II, III, IV
- I. Demonstrate an adequate understanding of the basic concepts of antenuptial agreements. I, II, III
- J. Demonstrate an adequate understanding of child support enforcement. I, II, III, IV
- K. Understand the difference between annulment and divorce. I, II, III, IV
- L. Demonstrate an awareness of the importance of communicating with the domestic client. I, II, III, IV, V

\*Roman numerals after course objectives reference goals of the Paralegal Studies program.

## III. Instructional Processes\*:

Students will:

1. Practice elements of the work ethic such as professionalism, preparedness, punctuality, honesty, cooperation, dependability, contribution, effectiveness, good manners, etc. *Personal Development Outcome, Cultural Diversity and Social Development Outcome, Transitional Strategy*
2. Refine reading skills and expand legal vocabulary through completion of weekly guided

reading exercises that allows more effective communication with lawyers and legal professionals. *Communication Outcome, Transitional Strategy*

3. Strengthen their analytical skills by locating court cases and statutes in the Educational Resources Center and on Westlaw to determine the application of the rules of law to specific facts. *Information Literacy Outcome, Problem Solving and Decision Making Outcome, Cultural Diversity and Social Development Outcome, Technological Literacy Outcome, Transitional Strategy, Active Learning Strategy*
4. Examine ethical issues related to legal representation, unauthorized practice of law, confidentiality, duty of legal professional to provide legal services, etc. *Personal Development Outcome, Cultural Diversity and Social Adaptation Outcome, Transitional Strategy, Active Learning Strategy*
5. Listen to speakers from the legal community to learn the demands for legal assistants who possess basic knowledge of legal topics in the work world. *Personal Development Outcome, Problem Solving and Decision Making Outcome, Transitional Strategy.*
6. Develop investigative skills using the Internet, library, and governmental agency resources to find relevant information. *Problem Solving and Decision Making Outcome, Information Literacy Outcome, Technological Literacy Outcome, Transitional Strategy, Active Learning Strategy*

\*Strategies and outcomes listed after instructional processes reference Pellissippi State's goals for strengthening general education knowledge and skills, connecting coursework to experiences beyond the classroom, and encouraging students to take active and responsible roles in the educational process.

#### **IV. Expectations for Student Performance\*:**

Upon successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Recognize and avoid acts that constitute the unauthorized practice of law. A
2. Recognize and avoid acts that constitute the breach of client confidentiality. A
3. Recognize potential and actual conflict of interest situations. A
4. Identify basic terminology of domestic law. B, C, D
5. Recognize and explain the function and purpose of antenuptial agreements. B,F
6. Identify examples of instances where a person may not need an antenuptial agreement. B,D,E,F
7. Identify and classify the various kinds of property the domestic client and spouse have acquired. B,D,E,F
8. Distinguish an irreconcilable difference divorce from a divorce on grounds. B,D,E,F
9. Identify the proper courts that have jurisdiction over domestic matters. B,E
10. Recognize the appropriate procedure for obtaining personal jurisdiction over a nonresident defendant. B,C,E
11. Recognize, understand and use the basic terms associated with paternity and legitimation. B,C,D,E,F
12. Read domestic statutes and understand terminology. B
13. Interpret state domestic law statutes and determine who may marry. B,C,D,E,F
14. Interpret state statutes on divorce and determine grounds for divorce. B,C,D,E,F

15. Interpret state child support guidelines and compute child support. B,C,D,E,F
16. Know the difference between marital and nonmarital property. B,C,D,E,F
17. Understand the difference between the rights of custodial and noncustodial parents. B,C,D,E,F
18. Understand the process of appeal. B,D,E,F
19. Recognize the formal requirements for a valid marriage. B
20. Develop and use checklists to elicit the information necessary for the preliminary draft of a divorce complaint. B
21. Develop and use checklists to elicit the information necessary for the preliminary draft of a custody modification petition. B
22. Develop and use checklists to elicit the information necessary for the preliminary draft of a child support modification petition. B
23. Understand the role of a guardian ad litem in custody proceedings. B,E
24. Recognize the paralegal's role in assisting the attorney in performing the required duties of a domestic practice. B,C,E
25. Recognize and define the techniques for child support enforcement. B,C,E

\*Letters after performance expectations reference the course objectives listed above.

## **V. Evaluation:**

### A. Testing Procedures:

Students are evaluated primarily on the basis of tests. The instructor will provide full details on a supplementary syllabus the first day of class.

### B. Laboratory Expectations:

Students will work in small groups to research an assigned topic then make a class presentation on that topic.

### C. Field Work:

Students will be assigned a mock client for whom he or she will complete a pleadings notebook (out-of-class skills projects). These may include:

- Drafting a complaint for divorce
- Drafting a marital dissolution agreement
- Drafting an answer
- Drafting a petition to modify support
- Preparing an antenuptial agreement
- Drafting correspondence to client
- Preparing a checklist for divorce, custody, child support
- Drafting a property settlement agreement
- Drafting an adoption petition

### D. Other Evaluation Methods:

1. All tests and papers will be graded for spelling and English usage in addition to content and format.
2. Students are partially evaluated on the basis of in-class projects requiring use of the stated skills. Class participation is important and will be considered in the final grade.
3. Any student encountering academic difficulty during the term is strongly encouraged to meet

with the instructor to discuss options and solutions.

E. Grading Scale:

A	93-100
B+	88- 92
B	83- 87
C+	78- 82
C	73- 77
D	65- 72
F	64 and below

**VI. Policies:**

A. Attendance Policy:

Pellissippi State Technical Community College expects students to attend all scheduled instructional activities. As a minimum, students in all courses must be present for at least 75 percent of their scheduled classes and laboratory meetings in order to receive credit for the course. (*Pellissippi State Catalog*).

B. Academic Dishonesty:

Plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. A student guilty of academic misconduct, either directly or indirectly through participation or assistance, is immediately responsible to the instructor of the class. In addition to other possible disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed through the regular Pellissippi State procedures as a result of academic misconduct, the instructor has the authority to assign an F or a zero for the exercise or examination or to assign an F in the course.

C. Other Policies:

Late papers will not be accepted nor will make-up tests be given without specific approval of the instructor.