Understanding the business of practicing family law

**University of Baltimore School of Law**

**SPRING, 2020**

**Course**: Understanding the Business of Practicing Family Law

Section ­LAWF 901.491

**Instructor**: Leslie G. Billman

(w) 410-280-1700

email: lbillman@lawannapolis.com;

Individual consultations can be arranged based on mutual availability; please contact the instructor to make such arrangements

**Days/Time:** Tuesdays, 6:00 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.

**Location:**  Check the Law School class schedule for the room assignment

**Course Description**:

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to help attorneys understand the business of family law: how to attract clients, how to decide which clients to accept and how to manage client relationships, as well as how to staff a practice and manage its finances. In addition, the course will familiarize students with the challenges of a family law practice, including clients who are often emotionally vulnerable, which places additional responsibilities on the practitioner. The course also will discuss methods that help the practitioner establish appropriate boundaries and maintain his/her equilibrium.

**Course Materials:**

There is no mandatory textbook. Students will be referred by the instructor to recommended readings pertaining to topics of study

**Student Learning Outcomes: Student learning outcomes include:**

-Selecting practice structures appropriate for the individual (i.e. small firm, large firm, solo practitioner

-Understanding the steps needed to set up a family law practice (i.e. insurance, office space, staffing)

-Generating clients through networking opportunities and marketing

-Understanding the financial dynamics of a family law practice’s income, expenses, escrow account

-Matching expenses to income and controlling both

-Learning to run a family law practice for profitability and intervening obstacles

-Problem-solving of day to day financial issues encountered when operating a law practice

**Grades:**

BASIS FOR GRADING: Class participation 50%; Projects/homework: 10%; Final Project: 40%

**Course Expectations:**

American Bar Association Accreditation Standards establish guidelines for the amount of work students should expect to complete for each credit earned. Students should expect approximately one hour of classroom instruction and two hours of out-of-class work for each credit earned in a class, or an equivalent amount of work for other academic activities, such as simulations, externships, clinical supervision, co-curricular activities, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

You are expected to complete all recommended reading assignments and to research and locate additional publications that bear on class topics. You should consistently participate in class discussion in order to demonstrate that you have reflected on and understand the issues raised in the assignments/readings/class topics.

Because of the online presentation of this class, you will be required to participate via a laptop or desktop computer. Participation by cell phone or other reduced screen is not permitted, and all such devices must be turned off during the class.

**Attendance**:

Class attendance is the primary obligation of each student whose right to continued enrollment in the course and to take the examination is conditioned upon a record of attendance satisfactory to the professor. The bar is VERY high given the limited enrollment, and only the most emergent absences are acceptable. A student who exceeds a single non-emergent absence) as illustrated below may be compelled to withdraw from the course, or may be barred from sitting for the final exam/project. Students who are forced to withdraw for exceeding the allowed absences may receive a grade of FA (failure due to excessive absence). This policy is consistent with American Bar Association Standards for Law Schools.

**Course Web Site:**

This course has a TWEN page that links to this syllabus, announcements, the class assignments, and other class materials. You are responsible for self-enrolling in the TWEN page and for checking it regularly for course information.

**Online Course Requirements:**

In order to successfully complete this course, students must adhere to the following online policies.

1. Students are expected to attend each class by computer with a camera and reliable connectivity in a quiet, undisturbed office or study space, except classes where in-person attendance is required by the instructor. (Note:  The instructor will provide advance notice of any classes where in-person attendance is required and will make alternative arrangements for students who are unable to attend in person.)
2. Students may not attend class by smart phone unless the instructor grants permission in advance due to a special circumstance.
3. During class, cell phones, tablets, and any other device not used to participate in the class must be turned completely off, and participation in non-class communications (emails, phone calls, texts, social media, etc.) is not permitted during class time.
4. During class, the student’s face must be visible via the computer's camera, and the computer's audio must function.
5. Students are expected to participate in class by answering questions and making comments, using the available technology for oral and written discussion.
6. If a power or internet outage occurs on the part of the student, students are expected to attempt to rejoin the class immediately.  If the outage persists for more than 10 minutes, the student must contact the instructor during class or as soon as possible after class and explain the circumstances.
7. If a power or internet outage occurs with the instructor’s system, students are to make continuing attempts log on for 20 minutes or until the students receive a message from the instructor before exiting the class.  Students who exit the class before that time will be considered absent for that class.
8. Classes may not be recorded by the student under any circumstances.  Any and all rights to this course and its materials are solely owned by the University of Baltimore and/or the instructor and may not be copied or reproduced without appropriate permission.
9. There may be instances where the instructor records the class.  When that occurs, the instructor will give advance notice that the class is being recorded on the University of Baltimore’s recording system.

**Class Cancellation:**

If the instructor must cancel a class, notices will be sent to students via email. In the first class period, we will discuss the impact of inclement weather, and make policy as to class postponement or attendance. For information about the weather’s impact on campus classes, students should visit the University of Baltimore web site or call the University's Snow Closing Line at (410) 837-4201.

**Academic Integrity:**

Students are obligated to refrain from acts that they know or, under the circumstances, have reason to know will impair the academic integrity of the University and/or the School of Law. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to: cheating; plagiarism; misuse of library materials; use of another’s book or study materials without consent; unapproved multiple submissions; material misrepresentation of one’s academic history or standing; misrepresentation of any academic matter; intentionally giving another student false or inaccurate information about class requirements; inappropriate discussion of exams; and misrepresenting or falsifying class attendance reports. [Reference to School of Law Honor Code, https://law.ubalt.edu/academics/policiesandprocedures/honor\_code/index.cfm]

**Title IX Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy:**

The University of Baltimore’s Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct policies are compliant with Federal laws prohibiting discrimination. Title IX requires that faculty, student employees and staff members report to the University any known, learned or rumored incidents of sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking on the basis of sex, dating/intimate partner violence or sexual exploitation and/or related experiences or incidents. Policies and procedures related to Title IX and UB’s nondiscrimination policies can be found at: http://www.ubalt.edu/titleix.

**Disability Policy:**

If you are a student with a documented disability who requires an academic accommodation, please contact Leslie Metzger, Director of Student Services at 410-837-5623 or via email at lmetzger@ubalt.edu.

**Class Meetings/Topics/Assignments**

1. January 14, 2020
	1. Course intro
		1. Class structure
		2. Grading
		3. Assigments
		4. Resources
		5. Communications
		6. Attendance
	2. Discussion of reading assignment
2. January 21, 2020
	1. Begin analysis of impact of firm revenue on personal finances
		1. Financial statement
3. January 28, 2020
	1. The law firm Business Plan
	2. Sources of revenue, expenses, and profitability
4. February 11, 2020
	1. Manipulation of revenue
5. February 18, 2020
	1. Time and Billing
	2. Collection Concepts
6. February 25, 2020
	1. Escrow and Ethics
7. March 3, 2020
	1. Individual performance factors
8. March 10, 2020
	1. Impact of individual performance factors
	2. Review of Revenue Concepts
9. March 17, 2020
	1. Spring Break
10. March 24, 2020
	1. Begin consideration of scope of law firm expenses
11. March 31, 2020
	1. Personnel and Equipment expenses
12. April 7, 2020
	1. Office Space, furnishings and supplies
13. April 14, 2020
	1. Software, utilities, insurance
	2. Assignment of Final project
	3. Marketing discussion
14. & 15 April 21, 2020
	1. Making it all work – combining revenue and expense selections and analyzing potential adjustments to successfully manage a law firm of any size.