

SYLLABUS - FALL 2011
LEGAL ENVIRONMENT OF BUSINESS 320F
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Introduction

The primary focus of this course will be on laws that commonly impact companies. It is my hope that you will be substantially more able to help a company avoid lawsuits after completing the semester. Exams will be used to evaluate the legal content of the course.

The second focus of this course will be on business ethics. The semester journal will be the primary tool for assessing the ethics portion of the course. LEB 323 meets the requirements for the UT ethics and leadership flag.

There is no prerequisite for this course.

GRADE COMPONENTS

A. Exams (Law) - 2/3 of total course grade

We will have three exams, and each will be worth 2/9 of your course grade. They will occur on:

- EXAM 1 (22%) - Thursday, September 22, in class
- EXAM 2 (22%) - Thursday, October 20, in class
- EXAM 3 (22%) - Thursday, December 1, in class

*Exams will assess your ability to recall and apply information. Many of the questions will require you to identify legal issues, many others will require you to apply legal ideas to a new situation, and a few of the questions will require you to apply multiple legal ideas to a single situation.

*Curves: If the class average is low, I curve exams; if the class average is high, I do not. I never "curve down".

*Missed exams: An unexcused absence during an exam will result in a score of 0 for that exam. If an absence is excused, I will give a make up exam which may be up to 100% essay. To have an excused exam absence, you must notify me of the reason for your absence before the exam, and then provide written documentation of extreme circumstances.

B. Class participation (Ethics) - 1/9 of total course grade

Your "baseline" score in this category will be 75. It can be adjusted up or down in the following ways:

- a. If you miss more than three classes, and do not have a good reason for doing so, I will deduct 10 points from your class participation score for every absence starting with the 4th.
- b. For participating in class discussions, I will add points.

C. Semester journal (Ethics) - 2/9 of total course grade

Periodically, I will distribute a handout with an ethical dilemma for you to analyze. There will be a total of about 8 questions during the semester, and three of the journal entries will be collaborative efforts. Your responses will be due on December 1. Detailed instructions will accompany the first assignment.

D. Other possible factors

*Additions. In the case of a genuine borderline grade, I will consider two and only two factors. First, if you have made substantial progress in improving exam scores, I may add a small bonus. Second, if you have shown unusual effort by coming to office hours regularly, I again may add a small bonus. No other factors will be considered, and no extra credit assignments will be offered.

*Deductions. Although it is rarely a problem, I may also deduct points for disrupting class or for failing to follow exam instructions.

Course Grades

At the end of the course, after all curves have been made, I will follow these cut-offs for each grade level:

lowest A: 88.0 average
lowest B: 76.0 average
lowest C: 64.0 average
lowest D: 60.0 average

*Plus/minus grading. The top 1/3 of scores in a grade range will receive a "+", and the bottom 1/3 of scores in a grade range will receive a "-".

Tape recorders

Unless you have a particular need and have discussed it with me ahead of time, please do not bring tape recorders to class.

Laptops

I have no problem with students using laptops to take notes, and a big problem with students who use laptops to surf the Internet during class.

Before you begin using a laptop in class, you must come by an office hour or come up to me after class in person and promise that you will use your computer only for taking notes.

Cheating

The minimum penalty for any scholastic dishonesty will be an F in the course, and I will pursue harsher punishments. See the UT Honor Code at <http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html>

Textbook: Essentials of Business Law, 3rd Edition, Jeffrey Beatty and Susan Samuelson, Southwestern/Cengage Learning

Class Schedule

On each exam, approximately 20% of the questions will come directly from the textbook assignments, and from any supplemental handouts that I distribute in class. These materials will not all be covered in class. The other 80% will be on material that is covered in the lectures. I will assign specific pages at the end of most lectures. Below is the list of topics that we will cover. Some will take a single day, while others will take as many as four days to cover. Ethics discussions and assignments will accompany many of the topics.

1. Introduction (Chapter 1)
2. Courts/Alternative Dispute Resolution (Chapter 3)
3. The Constitution (Chapter 5)
4. Landlord-Tenant Law (Chapter 31)
5. Torts (Chapter 6)
6. Contracts (*Selections from Chapters 9-17*)
7. Wills, Estates, and Trusts (*supplemental packet*)
8. Business Organizations (Chapter 29)
9. Intellectual property (Chapter 33)
10. Discrimination law and workplace rights (Chapter 28)
11. Bankruptcy and consumer protection law (Chapter 26)
12. International law (Chapter 8)
13. Cyberlaw (Chapter 32)
14. Criminal law (Chapter 7)

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Services for Students with Disabilities at <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>

By UT policy, I must be notified 14 days in advance of an absence for observance of a religious holy day.