

Course Outline

COURSE:	LAWS 3804A – Law of the Family
TERM:	Fall 2026
PREREQUISITES:	LAWS 2201, LAWS 2202
CLASS:	Day & Time: Thursdays 11:35am – 2:25pm Room: Please check Carleton Central for current Class Schedule and room location https://central.carleton.ca/prod/bwysched.p_select_term?ws_ea_code=EXT
INSTRUCTOR:	Dr. Megan Gaucher
CONTACT:	Office Hrs: By Appointment (In-person or Zoom) Email: megangacher@cunet.carleton.ca Emails will generally be answered during business hours only (9-5 weekdays) within 24-48 hours of receiving a student message.
BRIGHTSPACE:	https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/453322

CALENDAR COURSE DESCRIPTION

Legal framework surrounding the family and family relationships in Canadian society. Topics include marriage and cohabitation, matrimonial support, custody and access, and dissolution of marriage. State interventions through law; law and change in family structures; equality issues; dispute resolution processes.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Challenging the idea that the family exists outside the public realm and is therefore exempt from state intrusion, this course will examine the forces that organize and regulate our intimate lives. Questions we will be exploring include: What interest does the state have in regulating the family? How do we come to understand familial life as private? What identities are

preferred in laws that regulate the family and familial life? What happens to our legal understanding of family when its boundaries are tested by new family functions and formations? This course will examine the ways in which the politics of the family impacts all aspects of life ranging from the political – to the economic – to the social – to the legal.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course aims to:

- Provide students with an overview of historical and contemporary legal and legislative developments in Canadian family law;
- Enable students to critically map these developments against systemic formations of power organized around class, race, Indigeneity, gender and gender identification, citizenship status, sexuality, and ability, among others;
- Encourage students to reflect on the ways in which “family” acts as both a site of control and resistance;
- Facilitate the further development of sound critical thinking and reading skills, analytic writing skills, and collaborative engagement.

REQUIRED TEXTS

All articles, cases and other materials can be found on Brightspace. ***Students are not required to purchase books or any other materials for this course.***

EVALUATION

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Type of Assignment	Weighting	Due Date
Participation • In-Class Attendance • In-Class Participation • Online Participation	15%	N/A
Reading Annotations (3)	30% (10% each)	October 8th – For a reading selected from weeks September 17 th , 24 th and October 1 st November 5th – For a reading selected from weeks October 15 th and 22 nd December 3rd – For a reading selected from weeks November 12 th , 19 th , 26 th
In-Class Midterm	20%	October 22nd
Final Exam	35%	TBD

Participation (15%)

I encourage my students to take ownership of their learning and one way to accomplish this is through effective participation. This means attending and actively engaging in class, staying on top of assigned readings, and giving some thought to the readings and themes of the course in relation to your everyday lives.

In this course, students can earn participation grades in three ways: attending class regularly (5%), participating in-class (5%), and contributing to online discussion forums (5%).

Each week, a discussion question will be posted on Brightspace that is meant to stimulate your thinking about the materials, course themes, and current events. You can post a response to these questions on the Brightspace forum for participation marks. Responses are to be no more than 200 words and need to both answer the question and reflect your understanding of the course material. These posts will be graded on a pass/fail basis (e.g., either you met the requirements or you didn't) and once you have five passes, you receive the full 5%. If you submit a post that is a fail, I will let you know and offer some feedback. If you don't hear back from me within a week, you can assume that your post is a pass.

I strongly encourage you to not use GenAI (e.g., ChatGPT, DeepSeek, Copilot, Anara, etc.) to answer these questions. These tools typically generate vague and common responses, often resulting in multiple students submitting similar work. The goal is for you to read and demonstrate a clear grasp of the course materials using your own ideas, insights, and critical analysis.

Reading Annotations (30% - 3x10%)

The primary objective of the reading annotations is to engage in a deeper reading of three assigned articles and to demonstrate a clear grasp of primary arguments, key concepts, and course connections.

You are required to complete three reading annotations over the course of the term where you will mark up a **printed version of the reading**. This assignment must be handed in in-class (see dates above) will **not** be accepted electronically.

Each annotation will be worth ten points each. Further information is posted on Brightspace. All readings eligible for this assignment are designated on the reading schedule with ***. No other readings will be accepted for this assignment.

In-Class Midterm (20%)

For this midterm, you will analyze a current debate in Canadian family law using relevant course materials on **October 22nd**. You will be given a short set of questions, and you should use appropriate (and specific) lecture content and course materials to answer the question.

Answers are to be prepared manually (i.e., no electronics) and are due at the end of class. It will be open book, which means that you can bring paper course notes and readings to class to use during the midterm.

Final Exam (35%)

The final exam will be an examination on all material covered in the course and will take place during the formally scheduled examination period. Answers are to be prepared manually (i.e., no electronics) and are due at the end of class. It will be open book, which means that you can bring paper course notes and readings to use during the exam.

Students must apply to the RO to request a [deferred final exam](#). Deferred exams are only available to students who are in good standing in the course. In order to be in good standing, you must have completed a minimum of two reading annotations and the in-class midterm.

POLICY ON LATE PENALTIES AND REQUESTS FOR EXTENSIONS

Since you have a lot of choice when it comes to submission dates, extensions for the online discussion board posts or the reading annotations are not available. Please plan accordingly.

All other modes of evaluation are completed in class or during the scheduled examination period and are therefore not subject to extensions. Both the midterm and final exam are subject to accommodations through the PMC (e.g., additional time, assistive technology, alternative locations, etc.).

The granting of extensions is at the discretion of the instructor, who will confirm whether an extension is approved and its duration. For information about requesting short-term or long-term extensions, deferrals for final exams, or academic consideration due to illness, injury, or other extraordinary circumstances, please visit the Academic Consideration Policy page. All requests must be submitted to the instructor before the assignment due date or, in the case of exam deferrals, directly to the Registrar's Office. Full details and instructions can be found here: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-consideration-policy/>.

POLICY ON GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Students may use AI tools for basic word processing functions, including grammar and spell checking (e.g., Grammarly, Microsoft Word Editor, Copilot). It is not necessary to document the use of AI for the permitted purposes listed above. If you have a question about a specific use of AI that isn't listed above, please consult me.

This policy ensures that student voices and ideas are prioritized and authentically represented, maintaining the integrity of the work produced by students while allowing basic support to enhance clarity, correctness, layout and flow of ideas. The goal of adopting a limited use of AI (and opting for in-class examinations and handwritten assignments) is to help students develop

foundational skills in writing and critical thinking by practicing substantive content creation without the support of AI.

As our understanding of the uses of AI and its relationship to student work and academic integrity continue to evolve, students are required to discuss their use of AI in any circumstance not described here with the course instructor to ensure it supports the learning goals for the course.

Note: Students can also access resources related to citing Generative AI on the [MacOdrum Library website](#).

POLICY ON CLASSROOM RECORDING

Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy. Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact the [Paul Menton Centre](#).

SCHEDULE

Please see the LAWS 3804 – Course Schedule on Brightspace.

Fall 2026 Sessional Dates and University Closures	
<i>Please find a full list of important academic dates on the calendar website:</i> https://calendar.carleton.ca/academicyear/	
September 9, 2026	Fall term begins.
September 22, 2026	Last day for registration and course changes (including auditing) for Fall courses.
September 30, 2026	Last day to withdraw from full fall courses and the fall portion of fall/winter courses with a full fee adjustment.
October 12, 2026	Statutory holiday. University closed.
October 26-30, 2026	Fall break. No classes.
November 15, 2026	Last day for academic withdrawal from full and late fall courses.
	Last day to request Formal Examination Accommodations for December full fall, late fall, and fall/winter midterm examinations from the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities. Note that it may not be possible to fulfil accommodation requests received after the specified deadlines.
November 27, 2026	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in full fall term or fall/winter undergraduate courses, before the official December final examination period.
December 11, 2026	Fall term ends.
	Last day of fall classes.
	Classes follow a Monday schedule.
	Last day for take home examinations to be assigned.
December 9-10, 2026	No classes or examinations take place.
December 12-23, 2026	Final examinations in fall term courses and mid-term examinations in fall/winter courses will be held.
December 23, 2026	All final take-home examinations are due on this day, with the exception of those conforming to the examination regulations in the Academic Regulations of the University section of the Undergraduate Calendar/General Regulations of the Graduate Calendar.

STATEMENTS ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Submitting Substantially The Same Piece of Work More than Once for Academic Credit

While you may build on your past work from another course or assignment, you cannot simply copy/paste it as a new submission. Prior to doing so, please discuss it with me to clarify how this previous work will be utilized, how you intend on building on it, and how you will cite it.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as *'presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.'* This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT)
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own
- failing to acknowledge sources with proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor.

The Associate Dean of the Faculty follows a rigorous [process for academic integrity allegations](#), including reviewing documents and interviewing the student, when an instructor suspects a violation has been committed. Penalties for violations may include a final grade of "F" for the course.

STATEMENT ON STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>

Emergency Resources ([on and off campus](#))

- Crisis/Urgent Counselling Support: 613-520-6674 (Mon-Fri, 8:30-4:30)
- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1

Carleton Resources

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: call 613-238-3311, text 343-306-5550, or connect online at <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: call 613-722-6914 or toll-free 1-866-996-0991, or connect online at <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Good2Talk: call 1-866-925-5454 or connect online at <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: for online or on-site service <https://walkincounselling.com>

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the *Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances*, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy and Family-Status Related Accommodations

Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details about the accommodation policy, visit the [Equity and Inclusive Communities \(EIC\)](#) website.

Religious Obligation

Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, please go to: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/discrimination-harassment/religious-spiritual-observances/>.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. You can find the Paul Menton Centre online at: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. Read more here:

<https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>.

For more information on academic accommodation, please visit:

<https://students.carleton.ca/services/accommodation/>.

Academic Consideration for Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances

Due to medical and other extenuating circumstances, students may occasionally be unable to fulfill the academic requirements of their course(s) in a timely manner. The University supports the academic development of students and aims to provide a fair environment for students to succeed academically. Medical and/or other extenuating circumstances are circumstances that are beyond a student's control, have a significant impact on the student's capacity to meet their academic obligations, and could not have reasonably been prevented.

Students must contact the instructor(s) as soon as possible, and normally no later than 24 hours after the submission deadline for course deliverables. If not satisfied with the instructor's decision, students can conduct an "informal appeal" to the Chair of the department within three (3) working days of an instructor's decision. We have created a webform specifically for appeals to the Chair, which can be found here: <https://carleton.ca/law/application-for-review-of-refusal-to-provide-academic-consideration/>. *Note: This form only applies to LAWS courses and is not the same as a formal appeal of grade.* More information about the academic consideration can be found [here](#).