

Poverty Law

University of Florida Levin College of Law
Spring 2026 Syllabus
LAW 6812
3.0 Credit Hours

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Office Hours: Mon. & Wed. (3:00 PM – 4:00 PM)

Meeting Time: Mon. & Wed. (1:15 PM to 2:40 PM)

Location: Holland Hall 355D

Course Description:

This course introduces the substantive law, policies, and procedures that govern antipoverty efforts in the United States. Organized around key federal programs such as welfare, housing, health, and legal aid, the course explores foundational legal doctrines, significant case law, and the evolution of federal policies addressing poverty. Students will engage with academic debates on the causes of poverty—whether rooted in individual behavior, structural constraints, or a combination of both—and examine how these perspectives shape legal and policy responses. Throughout the course, we will analyze the trade-offs inherent in different approaches to poverty alleviation and consider the effectiveness of antipoverty programs. By the end of the course, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the legal and policy challenges associated with poverty law and practice in the United States.

Student Learning Outcomes:

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- I. Critically analyze and evaluate the legal frameworks governing public welfare programs in the United States, including key policies and case law shaping poverty alleviation efforts.
- II. Demonstrate the ability to apply relevant case law to real-world scenarios through interactive discussions, simulations, and case studies.
- III. Understand and articulate the multifaceted causes of poverty, including individual, structural, and systemic factors, and how they intersect with legal and policy frameworks.
- IV. Evaluate the effectiveness and trade-offs of federal and state approaches to poverty reduction, considering the implications of federalism and funding structures on program outcomes.

Required Course Materials:

POVERTY LAW, POLICY, AND PRACTICE (2021)

ISBN: 978-1543804256

Authors: Brodie et. al (I will refer to the textbook as “Brodie”)

Edition: 2nd

https://www.amazon.com/Poverty-Law-Policy-Practice-Casebook-dp-154380425X/dp/154380425X/ref=dp_ob_title_bk

Note: Please be sure to register for the Canvas course and have any required materials with you in print or easily accessible electronic form in class. You are responsible for checking your Canvas page and the e-mail connected to the page on a regular basis for any class announcements or adjustments.

Grades:

Students' grades in this course will be based substantially on either a 10–15 page research paper or a 30 minute class presentation on a topic of their choosing. We will have several milestone deadlines throughout the semester to help guide the development of your project; details will be provided on the first day of class. Adjustments to final grades may be made based on attendance and participation.

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory and an essential part of the course. In accordance with ABA guidance, you are allowed a total of two absences from class, for any reason (including for illness, medical appointments, job interviews, school activities, work tasks, family obligations, and the like). For ease of administration and to respect your privacy, I do not differentiate between “excused” or “unexcused” absences. As a result, there is no need to tell me why you will be or were absent from class, so long as you have no more than two absences total. Only observance of a University-recognized religious holiday does not count toward your two absences, but you must notify me in advance of those religious observance-related absences. More than two absences could result in a reduction of your final grade or even failing the course. Please do not arrive late to class, leave early, or leave to take a break during class absent extenuating circumstances. Please turn off your cell phone during class and mute other devices, including your laptop. The law school's policy on attendance can be found [here](#).

Office Hours:

My office hours this semester will be after class on Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM. While I love talking about poverty law and the law more generally, I am happy to talk about whatever you'd like. You do not need to prepare for office hours.

ABA Out of Class Hours Requirements:

ABA Standard 310 requires that students devote 120 minutes to out-of-class preparation for every “classroom hour” of in-class instruction. Each weekly class is approximately 1.5 hours in length, requiring at least **6 hours of preparation** outside of class.

Additional Information:

Other information about UF Levin College of Law policies, including compliance with the UF Honor Code, Grading, Accommodations, Class Recordings, and Course Evaluations can be found at this [link](#). Other information about UF academic policies and resources can be found at [this link](#).

Recordings of Class:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in

preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor and Student Conduct Code.

Health and Wellness Resources:

Law school can be a daunting experience, especially when life outside the law becomes challenging. UF Law provides numerous resources for your support, and I encourage you to seek help if you have concerns. Any student who has difficulty accessing sufficient food or lacks a safe place to live is encouraged to contact the Office of Student Affairs. If you are comfortable doing so, you may also notify me so that I can direct you to further resources.

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, (352) 392-1575 (available 24/7), or visit the [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in crisis.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call (352) 392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call (352) 392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *University Police Department*: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call (352) 392- 1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call (352) 733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

GENERAL COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: This syllabus is offered as a guide to the direction of the course. Our pace will depend in part on the level of interest and the level of difficulty of each section and is subject to change.

Week 1: Introduction to Poverty Law (Part 1)

Wednesday (1/21) – Course Introduction

- Review: Syllabus

Week 2: Introduction to Poverty (Part 2)

Monday (1/26) – What is Poverty Law?

- Read: Brodie p. 1-22

Wednesday (1/28) - Poverty in the United States

- Read: Brodie p. 24-42
- Optional Read: Brodie p. 42-52

Week 3: U.S. Social Welfare Policy (Part 1)

Monday (2/2) - The Origins of Poverty Relief in the US

- Read: Brodie p. 59-76

Wednesday (2/4) - War on Poverty

- Read: Brodie p. 76-90

Week 4: U.S. Social Welfare Policy (Part 2)

Monday (2/9) - Critique, Retrenchment, and Welfare Reform

- Read: Brodie p. 90-114

Wednesday (2/11) - Review Day

- Read: No new reading

Week 5: Poverty and the Constitution (Part 1)

Monday (2/16) - New Property and Procedural Due Process

- Read: Brodie p. 117-133

Wednesday (2/18) - Equal Protection (Part 1)

- Read: p. 139-154

Week 6: Poverty and the Constitution (Part 2)

Monday (2/23) – Equal Protection (Part 2)

- Read: Brodie p. 154-166

Wednesday (2/25) – Equal Protection (Part 3)

- Review: Brodie p. 168-180

Week 7: Poverty and the Constitution (Part 3)

Monday (3/2) – Litigating Welfare Rights

- Read: Hammond p. 361-390

Wednesday (3/4) – Review Day

- Read: No new reading

Week 8: Access to Justice

Monday (3/9) – Access to Justice

- Read: p. 631-646

Wednesday (3/11) – Who Provides Legal Services to the Poor?

- Read: p. 646-662

Week 9: NO CLASS (Spring Break 3/16 - 3/20)

Week 10: Welfare

Monday (3/23) - Introduction to Welfare

- Read: Brodie p. 189-198

Wednesday (3/25) – SSI and SNAP

- Read: Brodie p. 243-259

Week 11: Criminalization of Poverty

Tuesday (3/30) – Criminalization of Homelessness

- Read: p. 558-588

Thursday (4/1) – Criminalization of Poverty

- Read: p. 589-616

Week 12: Work (Part 1)

Tuesday (4/6) - The Working Poor

- Read: Brodie p. 273-295

Thursday (4/8) - Wage War

- Read: p. 296-321

Week 13: Poverty and Health

Tuesday (4/13) - Medicaid

- Read: TBD

Thursday (4/15) – Review Day

- Read: no new reading

Week 14: The Future of Poverty Law

Tuesday (4/20) - The Future of Poverty Law

- Read: Jason DeParle, *Monthly Payments to Families With Children to Begin*, N.Y. TIMES
- Read: Aaron Kaufman et al., *Universal Basic Income After COVID-19*, THE REGULATORY REVIEW (May 2, 2020)
- Read: CTR. ON BUDGET & POL’Y PRIORITIES, The Federal Job Guarantee (Policy Futures Series) (March 9, 2018).

Thursday (4/22) – Last Class

- Read: No required reading
- Due: Final Projects

*Last day of law classes on 4/27 (we will likely not have class this day)