

**University of Florida Levin College of Law**  
**COURSE SYLLABUS: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**  
**LAW 6101 (26475) - 1 Credit Compressed Course**  
*Spring 2026*

**INSTRUCTORS' CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Teresa Drake**

Email: [drake@law.ufl.edu](mailto:drake@law.ufl.edu)

Cell: (352) 870-8767

**Gretchen Casey**

Email: [gcasey1010@gmail.com](mailto:gcasey1010@gmail.com)

Cell: (352) 514-7200

**Sarah H. Wolking**

Email: [wolking@law.ufl.edu](mailto:wolking@law.ufl.edu)

126 Bruton-Geer Hall

Office: (352)273-0815

Cell: (510) 376-7837

**Office Hours:** Thursdays from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. If this time doesn't work for you, please contact me to arrange a meeting at another time. Students are encouraged to reach out to me anytime to discuss course issues or ask questions. You can email, text, call, or visit my office.

**MEETING TIMES AND LOCATIONS:**

This class will meet at Lancaster Correctional Institution in Trenton, FL. Students should gather at the law school by 8:15 a.m., and we will travel together in a van to the facility. Expect to return to the law school by 5 p.m. each day. Please bring a lunch to eat at the facility.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:**

This week-long, one-credit course introduces students to Restorative Justice (RJ) and trains them in its application. Six law students will join ten incarcerated students and four correctional officers in a 40-hour training session on Reparative Dialogues. Each of the five training days includes eight hours of lectures, role-plays, and discussions. This course, the first of its kind, will serve as a scalable model for other RJ programs within the Florida Department of Corrections.

RJ programs are linked to lower re-offending rates, partly because they encourage offenders to take personal responsibility for their actions and understand the human impact of their crimes. These programs boost empathy by offering opportunities for offenders to learn about the harm they caused, which can motivate personal growth and a desire to make amends. RJ courses can reduce violence within prisons. One study found that inmates in a restorative justice unit were 73% less likely to be convicted of a violent infraction than those in other units. By helping offenders develop a sense of responsibility and equipping them with tools to reintegrate into society, restorative justice can increase the chances of successful reentry after release.

The victim-offender dialogue (VOD) model safely connects the harmed individual (the victim), the person responsible for the harm (the defendant), and community members in a voluntary,

facilitated community group conference to discuss what happened, the harm caused by the crime, and how the person who caused the harm can demonstrate accountability and repair the resulting damage. While VOD conferences typically occur after a case has been adjudicated, this course will only involve the 20 people enrolled. The skills developed in this course will be immediately applicable in students' lives, whether at work, school, or in prison.

RJ emphasizes restoring balance and equipping participants with the skills and understanding to make better decisions in the future. These methods are rooted in traditional indigenous peacebuilding practices. Reparative dialogues give those who have been harmed a chance to express their needs and share how the crime has affected their lives. The person responsible for the harm learns about the impact of their actions and has the opportunity to take genuine responsibility for making things right. Those directly affected can address and repair the harm that occurred. Through a guided process, those harmed, the offenders, and when possible, community representatives and supporters, can engage in conversations to develop a safer, restorative-focused way to move forward.

RJ offers a different perspective on conflict resolution by emphasizing accountability, repair, and understanding needs. It includes a philosophy and various practices designed to mend relationships when harm occurs, while also actively fostering and maintaining connections to prevent future problems. It uses multiple methods aimed at repairing damage caused by crime, involving the primary parties in the dispute if they choose to participate.

### **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- **Understand Restorative Justice Principles:** Explain the core principles and philosophy of RJ, including accountability, repairing harm, and community involvement, and how these principles differ from traditional punitive approaches.
- **Demonstrate Facilitation Skills:** Practice and showcase effective techniques for Reparative Dialogues, including active listening, empathy, managing emotional dynamics, and guiding participants through challenging conversations.
- **Analyze Harm and Accountability:** Review the different impacts of harm — emotional, physical, financial, and relational — and describe how RJ processes foster accountability, healing, and repair.
- **Assess Suitability for Restorative Processes:** Determine if participants (victims, offenders, and community members) are ready to engage in Restorative Justice dialogues and recognize when RJ may or may not be appropriate.
- **Engage in Self-Reflection:** Thoughtfully examine personal beliefs, biases, and emotional reactions to conflict, harm, and accountability, and assess how these factors may influence their role as a facilitator.
- **Design and Implement Reparative Agreements:** Collaborate with participants to create practical, meaningful, and achievable agreements focused on healing harm and encouraging accountability.
- **Address Emotional Challenges:** Create strategies to manage personal and participant fears, discomfort, and emotional responses during Restorative Justice dialogues while maintaining a grounded, empathetic, and supportive environment.

- Promote Restorative Justice in Legal and Correctional Settings: Describe the potential advantages and challenges of RJ within criminal justice systems and advocate for its adoption where appropriate, including working with correctional staff and leadership.
- Train and Lead Future Restorative Justice Initiatives: Reflect on their personal growth during the training and assess their readiness to serve as future trainers or facilitators of RJ practices, including strategies for ongoing learning and collaboration.

### **REQUIRED READING AND VIEWING MATERIALS:**

- Lara Bazelon, Bruce A. Green, *Victims' Rights from a Restorative Perspective*
  - Florida Statutes 960.001 and 960.0021
  - *Restorative Justice: A Best Practice Guide for Prosecutors in Smaller Jurisdictions*
  - Howard Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*
  - Kay Pranis, *The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking*
  - Danielle Sered, *Until We Reckon: Violence, Mass Incarceration, and a Road to Repair*
  - Shannon Sliva & Alissa Ackerman, *Restorative Justice Responses to Sexual Violence: Legal, Social and Therapeutic Dimensions*
  - Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*
  - Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*
  - Peter Levine, *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*
  - Robert Yazzie, Hozho Nahasdlíí — *We Are Now in Good Relations: Navajo Restorative Justice*
  - Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz, *The Little Book of Victim Offender Conferencing*
  - Dominic Barter, *Restorative Circles: A Guide to Facilitating Transformational Dialogue*
  - The Ahimsa Collective, *Restorative Practices Workbook*
- Please check course announcements or assignment updates on Canvas and bring any necessary materials in print.*

### **COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING EVALUATION:**

Students will be evaluated based upon:

- Timely submission of written assignments in the syllabus: 50% (responses are due at the start of class and should be turned in at Lancaster CI)
- Classroom preparation and participation: 50%

### **CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Attendance in class is required by both the ABA and the law school. Attendance at each session of this compressed course is mandatory. Any missed session will result in a 5-point deduction from a student's final grade (on the 100-point scale) for each absence. If you have a legitimate reason for missing class, you should contact the instructors before or shortly after class ends so your absence can be excused. The law school's attendance policy can be found at this link: <https://www.law.ufl.edu/uf-law-student-handbook-and-academic-policies#>

**UF LEVIN COLLEGE OF LAW STANDARD SYLLABUS POLICIES:**

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: <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/427635/files?preview=98226140>

**UF ACADEMIC POLICIES AND RESOURCES:**

Other information about UF academic policies and resources can be found at [this link](#).

**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. Our weekly class time is approximately 40 hours, requiring at least 80 hours of preparation outside of class, including reading the assigned materials and completing the at-home exercises and assignments.

**COMMUNICATION COURTESY AND CIVILITY:**

Please adhere to common courtesy in all email messages and class discussions. We reserve the right to lower your final grade if you engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment for your classmates.

**COURSE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

This syllabus is a guide to the course's direction. Our pace will depend partly on the interest level and difficulty of each section and may change. Specific assignments and additional readings might be announced in class.

**Monday, January 12th - Day 1**

A. Welcome and Group Introductions

B. Schedule:

- 2-minute student teaching and feedback. Each student will select a concept or RJ term and give a 2-minute explanation or definition.
- Students will submit a daily written reflection that shares their thoughts and feelings about what came up for them during the day.
- Lecture and Group Discussion: Explore considerations and additional training needed to address the complexities and uncertainties around the impact of harm. We will discuss various interpretations of RJ, including how it is understood, introduced, practiced, and reinvented, along with the policies and precedents that shape its use in post-conviction criminal cases in Florida. Emphasis will be on the importance of practicing what we preach regarding eligibility and suitability for teaching RJ practices.
- Q and A
- Lunch break
- RJ practice and discussion

C. Review the influences shaping Gretchen Casey’s restorative practice for addressing emotional, physical, and financial harm and facilitating repair, including 40 years of Victim Advocacy, Morita Therapy, Robert Yazzie, Chief Emeritus of the Navajo Nation, Ahimsa Collective, NAVAC, NACRJ, and US data on the use and effectiveness of victim-offender dialogues.

- D. Evening Homework: Write a reflection. What skills, traits, and characteristics do you believe make a Trainer effective? Underline the ones you feel you embody.
- E. Personal Reflection Q's:
- What, truly, makes you come alive?
  - Pivotal turning points in your life?
  - An Act of Kindness You'll Never Forget?
  - One Thing on Your Bucket List?
  - One-Line Message to the World

## **Tuesday, January 13th - Day 2**

### **A. Schedule:**

- 2-minute student teaching and feedback
  - Submit your reflection and evening homework: What skills, traits, and characteristics do you believe make a Facilitator effective?
  - Lecture and Group Discussion: Beliefs Matter
    - What principles and beliefs guide restorative justice? Who, Why, What, and When?
    - What skills, traits, and characteristics are necessary for restorative conversations to enhance understanding, examine harm, encourage accountability, and foster healing?
    - Beliefs matter. Considering Conflict: Relationships are double-edged; trauma comes from them, and healing depends on them. Addressing the importance of relationships in conflict involves understanding what repairing harm and (mis)understanding mean.
    - Reconsidering Boundaries: Is it time to reimagine traditional boundary and transparency policies? When and how should you share your own experiences in conversations with a participant? Understanding what works and what doesn't involves knowing what is essential and what is flexible, as well as how to recognize and address the complexity of issues, impacts, and insights that can emerge from conflict.
    - What makes reparative dialogues challenging?
    - Exploring why reparative conversations are vital involves showing students how restorative practices create safety, support, accountability, and answer their questions. Learning the basics of restorative circles includes understanding what beliefs matter to individuals, building rapport and listening skills during complex or divisive discussions, and addressing the who, what, when, why, and what matters when teaching restorative circles in cases of significant harm, while also considering consent and safety. What are the limits of using restorative justice?
  - Q and A
  - Lunch break
  - Roleplays: Practice and discussion on expectation management, note-taking, inviting support persons and community resources, and other options available if a party declines RJ/VOD.
- B. Evening homework: written reflection. Is there anything about RJ reparative dialogues that scares or intimidates you? Where or with what do you need practice and support?

## **Wednesday, January 14th - Day 3**

### **A. Schedule:**

- 2-minute student teaching and feedback

- Submit a written reflection on which parts of reparative dialogues scare or intimidate you. Where do you need more practice and support?
  - Lecture and Group Discussion: Pre-Circle preparation conversations involve specific questions for each conflict and the parties involved: What questions does a victim-offender dialogue use to determine what to cover and explore? When are the participants ready? When is a facilitator prepared to schedule a reparative-focused meeting?
  - Teaching the option of RJ: Addressing your fit and readiness to teach the complex, evolving, and uncertain aspects of power and the “isms” of lived experience.
  - Creating achievable, relevant, and just agreement and post-circle action plans—ways to consider how collective agreements and follow-up can effectively involve VIPs (Violence Impacted People), supporters, and community members. What key elements of the collective agreement are necessary to foster a positive response to conflict?
  - Q and A
  - Lunch
  - Roleplays
- B. Evening homework: written reflection. On Monday, we discussed some of your experiences with conflict. Would you consider participating in a facilitated RJ in any of these situations? Why or why not?

#### **Thursday, January 15th - Day 4**

- A. Check-in
- B. Schedule:
- 2-minute student teaching and feedback
  - Turn in daily written reflections and evening homework.
  - Lecture and Group Discussion: Restorative conversations. Three key moments in the preparation process include the need for pre- and post-circle discussions with potential parties involved in a reparative meeting; understanding the how and why, along with the development and use of trainee workbooks. Additionally, collecting data on the participants in RJ training and the impact of completing the training.
  - Q and A
  - Lunch
  - Practice and discussion
  - TBD: Individual walks today?
- C. Evening homework: written reflection

#### **Friday, January 16th - Day 5**

- A. Check-in
- B. Each student teacher delivers a 10-minute lesson on restorative justice.
- Feedback on presentations.
  - What do we need to spend today addressing, practicing, and figuring out?
  - How do we handle our fearful moments while helping students of RJ navigate their own? What helps us accept these fears, stay grounded, and clarify, commit, or recommit to our needs and purposes?

- Both the complexity of the world around us and RJ facilitation can be demanding at times. It requires us to step outside our comfort zones and continually expand our RJ practices.
  - Explore nature-centered and/or body-centered approaches for connection and playfulness, as well as different creative mediums that help build resilience in yourself and offer it to other individuals and groups.
  - Social Connection: Our work can be very isolating. Writing about and inviting the warden or other FDC leadership to see and hear what you are doing can help. Reaching out for supervision and building a community of RJ resources is also beneficial. Follow-up with individual consultations for training support.
  - Defining your role(s) as a trainer. Are you interested and available to present RJ with or without CO support?
- C. Awarding of Training Certificates