

**ACADEMIC HONORS CAPSTONE COURSE SYLLABUS**  
**Law 655**

**Course Time and Location: Fridays, 11:30 am -12:20 pm (Online) (as needed)**

We will not meet every week for this class. The times that we will meet, and the locations, are noted on the “Weekly Schedule” below. Class meetings will be held virtually using Teams during spring semester 2026.

**Faculty Mentors:**

Kelly Collinsworth, [Kelly.collinsworth@siu.edu](mailto:Kelly.collinsworth@siu.edu)

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**Course Overview:**

In the course, you will complete a substantial project related to an area of legal study or practice of your choosing. The course will permit you to explore a narrow area of the law in greater depth than you might otherwise in a traditional course. To successfully complete the project, you will create a defined work product by which completion of the project can be assessed.

Examples of qualifying projects could include a) independent-study projects, substantial pro bono legal projects, or significant practical legal skills training projects that produce a significant legal academic writing, b) a community resource program or guide related to the law, or c) a substantially equivalent end product. Your project must be approved by the course instructors for you to receive credit for the course. You will work on your project with an individual mentor, who should be a lawyer in practice but may be a member of the faculty. We will help you with finding and selecting a mentor if needed.

**Learning Objectives:**

The objectives of this course are that you learn, by doing, and with the guidance of a mentor and the course instructors, to:

- Design and complete a project that produces a tangible work product that makes a substantial contribution to the law;
- Develop deep expertise in a narrow legal field of your own choosing;
- Develop and improve your abilities to pursue self-directed legal work, including research and writing, and set and meet your own deadlines;
- Build a relationship with a mentor on the faculty, or in law practice, who is an expert in your

- area of interest;
- Prepare and deliver an oral presentation describing your project and its results/implementation.

### **Attendance:**

In general, we will not meet regularly as a class, since this class is about you pursuing your own independent capstone project. We will meet a few times during the semester, as described below. You may not miss one of those meetings without advance approval. Unexcused absences will be dealt with in accordance with the law school rules and may include withdrawal from the course. You are expected to be on time for all class sessions. Being on time demonstrates respect for the professor and your classmates and minimizes disruptions to the class. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class.

Further, you cannot receive credit for the class unless you deliver both a tangible work product and an oral presentation describing your project. We will have a set time or times for students to deliver their presentations towards the end of the semester; you must deliver your presentation then unless due to extraordinary circumstances the course instructors allow you to re-schedule for a different time.

### **Assignments:**

The primary assignments for the course are two: 1) submit your project; and 2) publicly present your project. Along the way, there are several milestones you must meet relating to the project such as finding a mentor, submitting a proposal, and submitting a draft of your project. Those assignments are described on the Weekly Schedule below.

### **Grades:**

This class is graded S/U (satisfactory/ unsatisfactory). Note that this is not the same as pass/fail, and because this course is offered as part of the Honors Program the expectations for a satisfactory project are substantial. To be satisfactory, the end work product must meet your self-defined goals, demonstrate professional competency in the area chosen, reflect substantial legal research, and be appropriate for the chosen audience. To receive credit, you must both complete your project and present it in public. Under the law school rules, to earn one hour of credit, a student must spend a minimum of 42.5 hours over the course of a semester in a combination of class time and out of class activities. To ensure that you meet this requirement, you must record the time you spend on the course, per separately posted instructions for timekeeping. Simply spending the minimum required time in class and working on class activities does not guarantee credit. You will receive feedback at multiple stages during the semester from your project mentor, as well as the course instructors, as to whether you are making satisfactory progress on your project, and you will have advance notice if you are not on track to receive credit. The course instructors are responsible for making the final determination as to whether you receive credit for the course.

### **Workload Expectations and Time Keeping Requirement:**

The American Bar Association standards for accrediting law schools define “a ‘credit hour’ as an amount of work that reasonably approximates: (1) not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and two hours of out-of-class student work per week for fifteen weeks, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time.” This is a one-credit course, which means

that over the course of the semester you should spend the equivalent of 3 hours per week on your project. In order to ensure that you meet this requirement, you should record the time that you spend on the project to ensure that it meets the minimum requirements (42.5 hours for the semester).

### **Plagiarism and Collaboration:**

You may discuss your project with your mentor and others including other faculty or students at SIU. Any written or oral work product that you produce as part of your project must be your own. Borrowing the words of others without proper attribution will be grounds for receiving an “unsatisfactory” grade for the course and may result in a charge of violating the law school Honor Code that is reportable to the bar examiners.

### **D2L Page:**

There is a D2L page for this course which you should check regularly throughout the semester. We will use the page for email communication, as well as to post samples and examples of project materials and any required readings. There is no required book that must be purchased for this course; however, the instructors may post readings on the D2L page from time to time.

### **Mode of Delivery:**

Teams. You will see an invite with a Teams link for each meeting.

Please keep your microphone muted unless you are speaking or you are participating in a group discussion in a breakout room. You are welcome to unmute to ask a question.

You are expected to keep your video on unless you have received permission from the instructor (or have an accommodation related to video use) to turn it off. Exceptions may be made for short-term technical issues or a privacy concern (please notify the professors if that is the case). You must have your video on when giving or watching a presentation.

### **Class Etiquette and Professional Expectations:**

While in the class, you are expected to give the class your full attention and to use your electronic device(s) for only class-related activities. Please dress as you would for an in-person class. We may ask that you wear professional attire when we have guest speakers or you are giving a presentation. If you choose to use a virtual background on Zoom, please be sure it is professional looking.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

This Syllabus incorporates by reference the Law School Syllabus Attachment and the University Syllabus Attachment available on D2L.

## **Tentative Class Schedule**

Generally, we will not meet as a class every week during spring semester. Instead, your time devoted to this class will mainly be spent independently working on your capstone project. Times that we will meet, as well as deadlines relating to your project, are described below.

**(November 6):** Initial class meeting; review of project requirements, deadlines, discussion of beneficial mentoring relationships. .

**(November 21): Submission** of preliminary project ideas.

**(January 13): Deadline** to submit report describing project and name of mentor to instructors. Deadline to submit mentor agreement signed by your mentor.

**(January 16): Teams meeting:** Group discussion of progress and challenges to date.

**(Feb. 13): Teams meeting:** “Halfway” progress meeting with peers and course instructors.

**(Mar. 1):** Deadline to submit “substantially complete” version of project.

**(Mar.6) Teams Meeting** to discuss presentation requirements and advice for presentations.

**(Mar. 20): Teams meeting:** Practice presentations

**(Mar. 27-April 3): Teams and in-person: Presentations**

**(April 4-April 23): Implement project ideas**

**(Apr. 24):** Deadline to submit final project reflection paper and final timesheet.