

Client Interviewing & Counseling
Spring 2026

Sarah J. Taylor, Assistant Professor of Practice (Adjunct Professor)

Contact Info:

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Office hours: By appointment (ask me to arrange)

Meeting Place & Time: Wed., 5:00 to 6:40 p.m. on Zoom (link on D2L)

Course Description and Learning Objectives:

This skills-based course will cover theories and techniques used in interviewing and counseling clients, using role plays to illustrate client interviewing and counseling techniques and writing assignments relevant to client representation. Skills developed include active listening, effective fact gathering, client goal identification, empathetically relating to clients from diverse backgrounds, professionalism, and ethical and responsive decision-making.

We will have guests who will discuss their experiences representing clients, and we will discuss ethical, professionalism and practical issues that arise when representing clients. There will be midterm and final assignments in which you will conduct recorded interviewing and counseling sessions, receive feedback, and evaluate yourself.

My goal is to help you develop/improve skills so you can represent your clients in an ethical and effective way. The class is practical in nature, intended to help you think about ways to deal with situations you may encounter as an attorney. I believe you will find that even if you have never had clients, you have developed skills from your work and life experiences that can be transferred to client interviewing and counseling. All of you have these experiences; therefore, all of you have something of value to bring to class discussions and simulations.

Course Materials:

Required text: ***Lawyers as Counselors: A Client Centered Approach***, 4th Ed., by Binder, Bergman, Price, and Tremblay. (Referred to as Binder)

Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct:

<https://www.illinoiscourts.gov/rules-law/supreme-court-rules>

We will use D2L to communicate and assignments will be posted there. You should check D2L before class and are responsible for materials posted there.

Evaluation:

This is a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (pass/fail) course. To pass, you must read and be ready to discuss all assigned materials before class, satisfactorily complete homework and midterm interviewing and final counseling assignments, and turn them in on time, as well as

meaningfully participate in class. Although you will not receive a final numerical grade, you will earn points for class participation, homework and midterm and final assignments. You must receive at least **65%** of the available points to pass.

Basic points available (there may be extra credit and/or quizzes):

Class participation:	2 points possible for each class
Weekly assignments:	5 points each (unless otherwise noted)
Midterm Interview:	30 points (15 for interview & 15 for writing portion)
Final Counseling Assignment:	30 points (15 for interview & 15 for writing portion)

This is a participation/skills course designed to help you develop practical skills. You may be called on to answer questions or give constructive feedback to classmates. You will participate in discussions and simulations and receive constructive feedback from me and your classmates. Your level of participation (as participant and giver of feedback) and completion of assignments will be significant factors in determining whether you pass this class. Also, you are likely to have a better learning experience if you actively participate.

Class Attendance:

*Absent extraordinary or unavoidable circumstances, students who miss more than **three (3)** classes will not receive a passing grade.* I cannot approve additional absences over the allowed number. Any such request must be directed to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

Sometimes students must miss class for Law School activities, such as Moot Court. In the interests of fairness, if you miss class for such an activity, **you will receive a regular absence**, i.e., these are not “excused.” Please plan accordingly when deciding whether to use one of your absences. You are responsible for keeping track of your absences. You may ask me if you are unsure of your accrued absences.

Schedule of Reading Assignments:

A schedule of reading assignments will be posted on D2L. It may be adjusted during the semester. If so, an updated schedule will be posted, and I will tell you in class.

You are expected to read assigned reading materials before each class. To receive credit, written assignments must be turned in on time, typed, proofread, and follow the instructions. Unless stated otherwise, “on time” means that assignments are turned in **before** class to receive credit, regardless of whether you attend that class or not (i.e., you can get credit for the assignment even if you are not able to attend that class). Each assignment is worth **five (5) points** unless stated otherwise.

There will also be a midterm audio-recorded interview project and a final evaluation in which you will participate in a recorded Zoom client counseling session. These will also have a written component that must be turned in by the stated deadline, typed, proofread and consistent with the instructions to receive credit.

Barring exceptional or unavoidable circumstances, you will not receive credit for homework, midterm assignments or final assignments that are turned in late.

Zoom Links: The Zoom link for class will be posted on D2L. Please do not share it with people who are not in the class.

Zoom Video Participation Requirement:

To maximize the learning experience, **you must turn on your camera during class**, unless otherwise stated or you receive approval from me. After logging in, you will be in a waiting room and I will admit you if I see your name. Please ensure that when you connect your name appears.

I have listed my cell phone number. If you have problems logging into Zoom or get booted off Zoom and are having problems reconnecting, please text me.

Classroom Etiquette:

Virtual class should be treated as if you are in a classroom. Whether virtual or in person, please be courteous to others by giving the class, your classmates, and me your full attention.

Please log in from a quiet place where you will not be distracted and keep your phone silenced. Close applications on your computer to optimize video quality. To avoid background noise, please stay muted until you want to speak, or I call on you. Please use the “Raise Hand” feature to talk, not the chat, unless otherwise stated.

You may not attend class while you are driving a vehicle, due to safety concerns and the need to participate actively in class.

This is a participatory class and discussion is encouraged.

Class Recordings:

You may not record or screenshot class sessions. Classes will be recorded but the recordings will not be shared except for ADA compatibility reasons or in extraordinary circumstances, such as if a make-up class is scheduled on a day that is not a regular class meeting day. No other recording of class is allowed except with my prior okay.

Expected Time Requirements for Course:

The American Bar Association standards for accrediting law schools contain a formula for calculating the amount of work that constitutes one credit hour. According to ABA Standard 310(b)(1), “a credit hour is 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 **two-credit** hour course, meaning that we will spend one 100-minute block of time together each week. The amount of assigned reading and out of class preparation should be

about **four** hours for each class session. All told, applying the ABA standard to the number of credits offered in this class, you should plan on spending a total of **six** hours (two in class and four preparing for class) on course-related work.

Ban on Collaboration:

Unless specifically stated by me, you may not get help from any other person or from generative AI on writing assignments, midterm interview assignment or final counseling assignment. This ban includes obtaining written materials from any other person or generative AI and communicating with any other person about an assignment. **If you violate this policy, you will receive a failing grade on that assignment.** You also may be found in violation of the Honor Code, which can lead to serious penalties, including expulsion. An Honor Code investigation must also be reported to the Bar Examiners, even if you are cleared of any violation.

When in doubt about how to proceed, ask me first.

Additional Attachments:

Please review the attachments below, per SIU Simmons School of Law Administration:

[University Syllabus Attachment](#)

[School of Law Rules 2025-26](#)

[School of Law Honor Code](#)

[SIUC Student Conduct Code](#)

This information is also on the SIU Simmons Law website: [academics / rules and honor code](#).

SIU Simmons School of Law Syllabus Attachment – Spring 2026

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES: We ask that you become familiar with **Emergency Preparedness @ SIU**. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, on the Emergency Preparedness @ SIU website, and through text and email alerts. To register for alerts, visit <http://emergency.siu.edu/>.

DISABILITY POLICY. SIU Carbondale is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible experience for all students with disabilities. The Office of Access and Accommodations, formerly Disability Support Services, coordinates the implementation of accommodations. If you think you may be eligible for accommodations but have not yet obtained approval, please contact OAA immediately at 618-453-5738 or disabilityservices.siu.edu. You may request accommodations at any time, but timely requests help to ensure accommodations are in place when needed. Accommodations and services are determined through an interactive process with students and may involve consideration of specific course design and learning objectives in consultation with faculty. Please send approved accommodations to your faculty through the DSS online portal.

SALUKI CARES and COUNSELING & PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS). The purpose of Saluki Cares is to develop, facilitate and coordinate a university-wide program of care and support for students in any type of distress—physical, emotional, financial, or personal. By working closely with faculty, staff, students, and their families, SIU will continue to display a culture of care and demonstrate to our students and their families that they are an important part of the community. For Information on Saluki Cares: (618) 453-2461, or siucares@siu.edu, <https://salukicares.siu.edu/>. Associate Dean Shelia Simon ssimon@siu.edu or (618) 536-8321 is available at the Simmons Law School to help students access university resources. Additionally, counseling services are available through CAPS ([Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\) | Student Health Services | SIU](#)). A counselor is at the law school every Wednesday from noon until 4:30 pm in Room 268 for drop-in appointments.

SAFETY AWARENESS FACTS AND EDUCATION Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: <http://safe.siu.edu>

Have a good semester!