

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY
Course Syllabus
FIL 185 Section 003 – Legal, Ethical, and Social Environment of Business
Fall 2026

INSTRUCTOR: Kristen M. Nancarrow
OFFICE: State Farm Hall of Business, Room 117
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OFFICE HOURS: Monday and Wednesday 11:00am – 11:50am, and by appointment

CLASS TIME: Monday, Wednesday 12:00pm – 12:50pm in-person; Friday asynchronous
*Three exams given on Fridays from 12:00pm – 12:50pm. See detailed calendar for more information.

CLASS LOCATION: Center for the Visual Art, Room 0147

Text (optional):

Business Law and Strategy, Melvin, Orozco, Guerra-Pujol, The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2nd Ed.

Course Description:

The course is an introduction to the interplay between business, ethics, and law. It will include lessons in the basis of law, the legal system, and specific arenas where law regulates business interactions. Emphasis will be placed upon providing the student an introduction to various aspects of business law and thinking through realistic ethical business dilemmas.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, the student should be able to:

- Explain the origins and sources of American Law
- Understand the interplay of business and law
- Analyze a fact situation, identify the legal issues, and explain the application of law to the situation
- Identify and explain the difference of criminal or civil liability
- Assess advantages and disadvantages of different remedy options
- Identify various methods of ADR and their respective advantages and disadvantages
- Identify and explain a contractual agreement
- Analyze factual situations which various aspects of law regulate
- Understand both sides of real-world business ethical dilemmas and make an argument for which principles you think should be consistently applied to future dilemmas

Class Format, Attendance, and Participation:

Attendance is mandatory for all classes; however, I recognize that extenuating circumstances do come up. If you need to miss class for any reason, there is no need to contact me. You are responsible for reading through the missed material and reviewing the slides posted on Canvas. If you have questions after this review, please feel free to email or come by office hours for clarification.

For the first two-thirds of the semester, class time will be spent on lecture, infused with as much classroom discussion as possible. The exams will measure your understanding of the material presented in class and the assigned reading. You will understand the content better if you read the required material prior to the lectures.

The last one-third of the semester will be dedicated to case studies. Case studies are real-life examples of how the content we've covered in class can affect a business. Because these case studies cover the principles we studied throughout the semester, your timely work on the case studies (signing up for a case, turning in your paper before the discussion, formatting the paper correctly, and participating in the discussion) is a large percentage of your total grade.

During the case study portion of the semester, we will have the following cadence:

- Monday – Professor lecture that covers relevant material
- Wednesday – Professor/student-led case discussion
- Friday – Remote review for exam

There will be four cases. Each student is responsible for signing up for one of the four cases, reading it, writing a paper about it, and being “on call” during the discussion of that case (a sign up will be provided at a later date).

When you are “on call” for the case discussion, you will be responsible for:

- (1) individually writing, printing, and turning in a one-page, single spaced summary of your thoughts on the case (due at the start of class); **and**
- (2) discussing the intricacies of the case during the class through volunteer and on-call discussion

Detailed instructions for the case study will be discussed in class and posted to Canvas after Exam #2. If you miss the in class instructions, it is your responsibility to ensure you understand the case study requirements, due dates, and grading policies.

Grading:

Each student's grade is determined by performance on exams (~85%) and the case study (~15%).

Exams

Exams are 50 minutes long and consist of 40 multiple-choice questions. Each question equals one point. Content tested includes both the readings and the lectures. The exams will be taken remotely, on Canvas, during the announced time period. All exams are open source (you may use your book, notes you take from class, my posted slides, Google, Gemini, and ChatGPT). However, you may not work with any other person on an exam, or copy/paste any exam questions into a word document to review at a later time. You may not use any electronic source that saves and republishes test questions (such as Chegg, Gauth, or GradeHero). If you are found to be in violation of this policy, you will receive a zero on the exam, and I reserve the right to make the remaining exams in person, closed book/closed note.

Exam #1, Exam #2, and Exam #3 will not be cumulative in nature. However, the Final Exam will cover the entire semester.

I will drop your lowest score from among the first three exams (not the final exam). For example, if your lowest score is on Exam #2, I will only count Exam #1 and Exam #3 towards your final grade. The final exam is not droppable, and counts for everyone. I will drop the lowest of the first three exams automatically, for everyone, after Exam #3.

This also means that if you need to miss one of the first three exams for any reason, that is fine. You will receive a zero on the exam, and that grade will be dropped. Because of this policy, **I do not allow any make up exams**, unless you have an excused absence from the Dean of Students Office (these are granted for certain military duty or bereavement). The full policy may be found here: <https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/contact/absence/>.

I strongly recommend taking all the exams. Each semester I have students who miss two exams. My exam make up policy is still applicable, and if/when students miss the second exam, without an excused absence for the Dean's Office, they receive a zero for one of their counted exams. This makes it extremely difficult to pass this course. The dropped exam policy gives each student one "freebie" in case a conflict or emergency arises, but each student only gets one, and I will not make exceptions to my exam make up policy in the event a second exam is missed.

I will allow make ups for the Final Exam at my discretion; however, I will deduct points for each day the exam is taken late.

Case Studies

Case studies, and your timely participation in them, determines ~15% of your grade. You may earn up to 20 points for participation in case studies. Detailed information on case studies will be discussed after Exam #2.

Grading Scale

The class is graded on the following:

- ✓ Exam #1 – 40 points*
- ✓ Exam #2 – 40 points*
- ✓ Exam #3 – 40 points*

*Of Exams #1, #2, and #3, only your highest two exam scores are counted, for a maximum of 80 points

- ✓ Final Exam – 40 points
- ✓ Case Study – 20 points

Total Available Points - 140

This is an ethics class, and it is very important to me that all students are treated the same, using objective measures to determine all grades, with no exceptions. The following performance levels define each letter grade. **There will be no grade movement/reconsideration/adjustments after the final exam, and you will have to achieve the points outlined below to receive a certain grade.** Each semester, I have a handful of students who are on the cusp of a higher grade (for example, a student who earns 125 points). In fairness to all students, I do not do grade bumps, or add points, for any reason.

A	126-140
B	112-125
C	98-111
D	84-97
F	83 or below

I typically have the Gradebook in Canvas updated within five business days of an assignment and/or exam being completed. As such, you are able to track your grade throughout the semester. If you are struggling in class, the time to come discuss questions or concerns is right away (the earlier in the semester, the better). Once the last few weeks of the semester hit, there aren't many things you can do to improve your grade, outside of doing well on the final exam.

Extra Credit

I may offer extra credit pop quizzes in class throughout the semester. Each extra credit pop quiz is worth two extra credit points, and I may offer up to three pop quizzes during the semester. You must attend class to participate in and receive credit for the pop quizzes.

Recording Classroom Activity:

In order to protect the privacy interests of all student enrolled in the class, and to encourage an open and fair expression of all student views in the classroom without fear that student views may be recorded and posted in another forum, recording of classroom lectures and conversations is not permissible without the express, prior written consent of the instructor.

Unauthorized recording or photography of classroom activity shall be considered as disruptive of a student's right to learn.

Academic Dishonesty:

This is an ethics class. If you are considering cheating in an ethics class (e.g., sharing exam questions or answers with others, using chat rooms to discuss exam answers during tests, or turning in work that you did not complete yourself), you should take time to reflect on what kind of person and career you are working towards and whether you're on a path that will get there.

You are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct. **All work is to be appropriately cited when it is borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source.** Unauthorized and unacknowledged collaboration on any work, or the presentation of someone else's work, is plagiarism. In certain circumstances, I may be required to refer violations to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

All exams are open source (you may use your book, notes you take from class, my posted slides, Google, Google AI, and ChatGPT). However, you may not work with any other person on an exam, or copy/paste any exam questions into a word document to review at a later time. You may not use any electronic source that saves and republishes test questions (such as Chegg, Gauth, or GradeHero). If you are found to be in violation of this policy, you will receive a zero on the exam, and I reserve the right to make the remaining exams in person, closed book/closed note.

Accessibility Statement:

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 308 Fell Hall, (309) 438-5853, or visit the website at <https://studentaccess.illinoisstate.edu/>.

Additional Statement:

ISU remains committed to creating and maintaining a working, learning and living environment that is welcoming, supportive, respectful, inclusive, diverse and free from discrimination and harassment.

Important Disclaimers:

Please understand that my profession is that of Assistant Professor, not practicing lawyer. While your questions in class are not only welcomed, but encouraged, nothing I say should be

construed as legal advice. Our relationship is that of professor and student, not attorney and client, so the special privileges of the attorney-client relations will not apply to us.

****THIS COURSE OUTLINE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE****

Color Key

University Approved Holiday

Remote Class – Recording in Canvas

Exam – Remote Exam in Canvas

Date	Reading	Topic
Monday, August 17		Instructor introduction / Introduction to the course
Wednesday, August 19	Chapter 1	Legal Foundations and Thinking Strategically
Friday, August 21	Chapter 3	Business and the Constitution
Monday, August 24	Chapter 4	The American Judicial System, Jurisdiction, and Venue
Wednesday, August 26	Chapter 4 (cont.)	The American Judicial System, Jurisdiction, and Venue
Friday, August 28		Remote Class – Review Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5
Monday, August 31	Chapter 5	Resolving Disputes: Litigation and ADR
Wednesday, September 2	Chapter 5 (cont.)	Resolving Disputes: Litigation and ADR
Friday, September 4		EXAM - #1 in Canvas from 12pm to 1pm
Monday, September 7	No Class – Labor Day Holiday	
Wednesday, September 9	Chapter 8	Contracts: Overview, Mutual Assent, and Consideration
Friday, September 11	Chapter 8 (cont.)	Contracts: Overview, Mutual Assent, and Consideration
Monday, September 14	Chapter 9	Capacity and Legality
Wednesday, September 16	Chapter 9 (cont.)	Capacity and Legality
Friday, September 18		Remote Class – Review Chapters 8 and 9
Monday, September 21	Chapter 10	Enforceability
Wednesday, September 23	Chapter 11	Performance
Friday, September 25		Remote Class – Review Chapters 10, 11, 12
Monday, September 28	Chapter 11 (cont.)	Performance
Wednesday, September 30	Chapter 12	Breach and Remedies
Friday, October 2		EXAM - #2 in Canvas from 12pm to 1pm
Monday, October 5	Chapter 27	Choice of Business Entity and Sole Proprietorships
Wednesday, October 7	Chapter 28	Partnerships
Friday, October 9		Remote Class – Review Chapters 27 and 28
Monday, October 12	Chapter 29	Limited Liability Companies
Wednesday, October 14	Chapter 30	Corporations: Formation and Organization
Friday, October 16		Remote Class – Review Chapters 29, 30, 31
Monday, October 19	Chapter 30 (cont.)	Corporations: Formation and Organization
Wednesday, October 21	Chapter 31	Corporate Transactions: Acquisitions and Mergers
Friday, October 23		Remote Class – Review Chapters 36 and 37
Monday, October 26	Chapter 36	Remote Class – Agency Formation, Categories, and Authority
Wednesday, October 28	Chapter 37	Duties and Liabilities of Principals and Agents
Friday, October 30		EXAM - #3 in Canvas from 12pm to 1pm

Monday, November 2	Chapter 2	Business, Societal, and Ethical Contexts of Law
Wednesday, November 4	Case #1	
Friday, November 6		Remote Class – Review Exam #1 for Final
Monday, November 9	Chapter 43	Consumer Protection
Wednesday, November 11	Case #2	
Friday, November 13		Remote Class – Review Exam #2 for Final
Monday, November 16	Chapter 44	Criminal Law and Procedure
Wednesday, November 18	Case #3	
Friday, November 20		Remote Class – Review Exam #3 for Final
Monday, November 23	No Class – Thanksgiving Break	
Wednesday, November 25	No Class – Thanksgiving Break	
Friday, November 27	No Class – Thanksgiving Break	
Monday, November 30	Chapter 35	Regulation of Corporate Governance and Financial Markets
Wednesday, December 2	Case #4	
Friday, December 4		Remote Class - Review of case studies and Chapters 2, 43, 44, and 35
Finals Week (December 7-11)		EXAM – Final in Canvas, as scheduled by the University