

Western State College of Law
Immigration Law
Fall 2026 (Thursdays 6-8:50PM)
Professor Sabrina Rivera

Course Description

Welcome to Immigration Law! This three-unit course examines the laws, policies, and practices that govern the immigration legal system in the United States, while exploring questions about federal power limits and immigration enforcement tactics targeting race and nationality. This class has an integrated lawyering skills component, where students will have the opportunity to develop and strengthen practical lawyering advocacy skills through simulations and by providing consultation to a community member seeking legal assistance and vulnerable to deportation, in partnership with a local nonprofit organization.

Course and Learning Goals

1. Develop foundational knowledge of the U.S. immigration laws, including the constitutional treatment of noncitizens, the Immigration & Nationality Act (“INA”), and the legal processes governing admission, detention and deportation.
2. Explain how the INA relates to other immigration federal authorities.
3. Understand when and how an individual becomes subject to the immigration laws.
4. Distinguish the legal processes of affirmative and removal proceedings.
5. Develop professional responsibility and lawyering skills (e.g., interviewing, fact investigation, legal research, legal analysis and interpretation, legal writing).

Class Materials

The following course materials are **required**:

1. Understanding Immigration Law

Fourth Edition (forthcoming January 2026)

by Kevin R. Johnson, Raquel Aldana, Bill Ong Hing, Leticia M. Saucedo, Enid Trucios-Haynes

ISBN 978-1-5310-3106-0

2. AILALink

Sign up for to become a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Associations (AILA) [here](#) and to access AILALink (free to sign up). You can access the assigned statutes (e.g. INA) and regulations (e.g., 8 C.F.R.), and other assigned readings. You will receive an email the first day of class with additional instructions on how to register for AILA and access the materials on AILALink.

Course handouts (other assignments) are posted on Lexis Classroom.

Grading

This course follows WSCL’s 4.0 scale and is an elective course. All three units of the course are graded. The course’s grade will be based in significant part on a final examination at the end of

the semester. Each grading component will be described in greater detail through a handout the first day of class. The grading will be based on the following components:

- Class attendance, preparation, and participation – 30 points
- Consultation and memorandum – 35 points
- Final examination – 35 points

If you are a candidate for the Immigration Law Certificate, Immigration Law is a required course for obtaining the Certificate. Immigration Law also satisfies the elective component of the Criminal Law Practice Certificate. The course is excellent preparation for taking the Immigration Clinic (which is a 5-credit course in which students represent real-life clients in immigration matters, and involves an application process).

Class attendance, preparation, and participation (30 points)

Attendance is required for all students in accordance with WSCL's attendance policy. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. Those students whose names do not appear on the roster will be marked absent unless they sign the roster before the end of class. In addition, anyone who arrives late or leaves early without my prior approval will be considered absent. Absence from more than 20 percent of the class meetings will result in a course grade of "AF." Signing another's name to the roster or asking someone to sign your name when you are not present is a violation of the Honor Code and will result in academic and disciplinary action.

This course will work best if our examination of the materials we will study includes a considerable amount of lively and thoughtful discussion, in which a broad cross-section of the class takes part, rather than the same few each day. You are also encouraged to voluntarily participate in the discussions and may be asked questions related to the reading assignments during class. You are expected to be prepared to discuss and explain the readings, including the reading assignments and in class activities. You are expected to devote at least two hours of out-of-class time preparing for each hour of classroom instruction.

In-class activities

A part of the course's participation evaluation will involve in-class simulation exercises and hypotheticals designed to reinforce the assignments and develop practical lawyering skills. Additional instructions will be provided in handouts (available on Lexis Classroom). The exercises aim to support the development of substantive legal knowledge, legal reasoning, and problem-solving skills.

Consultation and memorandum (35 points)

All students are required to complete one consultation and a short written memorandum before the last day of class. The consultation will provide students with an opportunity to practice applying legal analysis to a real client scenario. A handout with additional instructions will be provided the first week of class.

Final examination (35 points)

The final exam will assess the students' ability to identify relevant legal issues and analyze immigration law and principles discussed in class. The examination will be three hours. You may

bring in a copy of the INA and a one-page outline. The exam will include long- and short-answer essay questions, multiple-choice questions, and true/false questions. Additional information will be provided in a handout closer to the end of the semester.

Immigration court reflection

Students will have the opportunity to improve your class grade through a written reflection paper. Students may observe an immigration court hearing and submit one short written reflection paper during the semester. The paper is intended for you to reflect on your observations. Good papers submitted on time will be given a $\checkmark$ (“check”) grade. Excellent papers will be given a $\checkmark+$ (“check plus”). $\checkmark+$ performance on both papers will improve your overall class grade. Consistent $\checkmark$ performance on the two papers will not affect your class grade. Please note, however, that poor papers or papers submitted late will be given a $\checkmark-$ (“check minus”). $\checkmark-$ performance on both papers will result in a reduction in your overall class grade. Additional instructions will be provided in a handout the first week of classes.

Laptops and Computers

Using laptops during class to check email, browse the internet, or do work for another class is not permitted. You only need to have your laptop open to refer to discussed materials or take notes. We encourage you to limit laptop use during discussion-heavy portions of the class and instead take notes with a pad or notebook and pen.

Using AI Programs

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), a technology known for creating novel content based on given input, is now a prominent feature in many professions, including the legal community. It is capable of being a powerful tool when used responsibly and ethically. Examples include Lexis+AI (Protégé), CoPilot, ChatGPT (all versions), Claude, Gemini, CoCounsel, Spellbook, and Grammarly Go. Students enrolled in this course will have the opportunity to be trained to use selective generative legal AI tools in an ethical and professional manner to help you prepare for your consultation and assist with your research and writing of a memorandum. To that end, a footnote should be included in the first paragraph of any document written with the assistance of generative AI, acknowledging the use and confirming that the document signator (or author) has reviewed and verified all information. Below is an example of such footnote:

Portions of this - insert type of documents, i.e. motion, email, memo, letter - were researched, drafted, and/or edited in collaboration with Generative AI tools. All content has been reviewed and verified by the document signator (or author).

I encourage you to see the potential of generative AI as a complement to your own skills rather than a replacement. This policy is intended to ensure that you develop a strong foundation in legal research and writing, which will enable you to use generative AI appropriately and effectively in your future practice.

Communication

All students must be registered on Lexis Classroom. I will use Lexis Classroom to communicate with the class electronically and to post slides, handouts, and revised syllabi.

Contact Information and Office Hours

I will schedule office hours on Thursdays from 3PM to 6PM, and, other times upon request. Please email me at srivera@wsulaw.edu to request a time to meet. Appointments are available via in person, zoom or phone call.

Below is my contact information:

Email: srivera@wsulaw.edu

WSCL Phone/Text: (714) 459-2005

Personal Phone/Text: (562) 477-9361.

Course Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments:

The assigned reading should be done before class. Please be prepared to (1) discuss readings; (2) conduct simulation exercises; and, (3) participate in any of the class discussions. It is estimated that, on average, the assigned reading and other classroom preparation for each class should be 6 hours per week.

Syllabus

Week	Date	Topics	Reading Assignments	Learning/Class Assignments
1	8/20	Foundations of U.S. immigration and citizenship law ▪ Introduction to the immigration legal system ▪ Origins of U.S. immigration laws and racial restrictions on citizenship Professional responsibilities	▪ Johnson, et.al, <i>Understanding Immigration Law</i>: ○ Ch. 1, pp. 6-16 and Ch. 2, pp. 42-102 ○ Ch. 5, 242-256 ▪ Congressional Research Service, Immigration 101: Executive Branch Agencies Involved with Immigration <i>Skim:</i> ▪ California Rules of Professional Conduct: ▪ Rule 1.1 (Competence); ▪ Rule 1.2 (Scope of Representation and Allocation of Authority); ▪ Rule 1.3 (Diligence); ▪ Rule 1.4 (Communication); ▪ Rule 1.6 (Confidentiality); ▪ Rule 3.3 (Candor Toward the Tribunal); ▪ California Business & Professions Code Section 6068	▪ Read the Immigration consultation and memorandum instructions ▪ Sign up for AILALink ▪ Sign and submit duty of confidentiality agreement
2	8/27	▪ Immigration law and the Constitution		

		▪ Limits to immigration enforcement powers ▪ Noncitizens rights		
3	9/3	Introduction to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) ▪ Immigrant and Nonimmigrant visas ▪ Family-based visas		
	9/10	Admission procedures ▪ Immigrant and Nonimmigrant Visas ▪ Removal mechanisms at the border		
	9/17	▪ Employment Based Visas (Guest speakers) Interviewing and counseling clients		
	9/24			
	10/1			
	10/8			

	10/15			
	10/22			
	10/29			
	11/5			
	11/12			
	11/19	Final exam review		

DISABILITY SERVICES STATEMENT:

Western State College of Law provides accommodations to qualified students with disabilities. The Disabilities Services Office assists qualified students with disabilities in acquiring reasonable and appropriate accommodations and in supporting equal access to services, programs, and activities at Western State College of Law.

To seek reasonable accommodations, a student must contact Senior Assistant Dean Donna Espinoza, Student Services Director and Disabilities Services Coordinator, whose office is in Room 276. Dean Espinoza's phone number and email address are: (714) 459-1117; despinoza@wsulaw.edu. When seeking accommodations, a student should notify Dean Espinoza of her or his specific limitations and, if known, her or his specific requested accommodations. Students who seek accommodations will be asked to supply medical documentation of the need for accommodation. Classroom accommodations are not retroactive, but are effective only upon the student sharing approved accommodations with the instructor or professor. Therefore, students are encouraged to request accommodations as early as feasible with Dean Espinoza to allow for time to gather necessary documentation. If you have a concern or complaint in this regard, please notify Dean Espinoza; or please notify Dean Halim Dhanidina at hdhanidina@wsulaw.edu or (714) 459-1168. Complaints will be handled in accordance with the College of Law's "Policy against Discrimination and Harassment."

Western State College of Law – Programmatic Learning Outcomes

Western State College of Law’s curriculum is designed so that every student achieves a level of competency prior to graduation in each of the eight Programmatic Learning Outcomes listed below:

1. Doctrinal Knowledge

Students will demonstrate knowledge of substantive and procedural law in the core curriculum subjects, including Contracts, Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, Torts, Real Property, Business Association, Evidence, Civil Procedures, Constitutional Law, Estates, Community Property, Remedies, and Professional Responsibility.

2. Practice Skills

Students will demonstrate the development of other law practice skills. Each student’s chosen outcomes within this category will be varied based on the student’s particular interests, coursework and work experiences. They may include, but are not limited to, the following topics: oral presentation and advocacy; interviewing; counseling; client service and business development; negotiations, mediation, arbitration, or other alternate dispute resolution methods; advanced legal research and writing (excluding purely academic papers and the first four units earned in introductory first-year legal research and writing class); applied legal writing such as drafting contracts, pleadings, other legal instruments; law practice management or the use of technology in law practice; cultural competency; collaboration or project management; financial analysis, such as accounting, budgeting project management, and valuation; cost benefit analysis in administrative agencies; use of technology, data analyses, or predictive coding; business strategy and behavior; pre-trial preparation, fact investigation, such as discovery, e-discovery, motion practice, assessing evidence, or utilizing experts; trial practice; professional civility and applied ethics; a law clinic that includes a classroom component; or a legal externship that includes a classroom component.

3. Legal Analysis

Students will demonstrate the ability to identify the factual and legal issues implicated by a fact pattern and to appropriately use cases (including identifying the salient features of an appropriate precedent case, identifying legally significant similarities or differences between the precedent case and a fact pattern and explaining why those are legally significant) and rules (including the ability to connect legally significant facts in a fact pattern to the rule) to predict how a court would decide the issue. Students will also demonstrate the ability to identify and evaluate the public policies of a precedent case or rule, and be able to evaluate how public policy can impact the application of a rule to the legal issue.

4. Legal Research

Students will demonstrate the ability to locate relevant legal authority using a variety of book and electronic resources, and to properly cite to such legal authority.

5. Communication

Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate both orally and in writing in a manner appropriate to a particular task to effectively convey the author or speaker’s ideas. This includes

audience sensitivity in written and oral communication (the ability to adopt a tone, style and level of detail appropriate to the needs, knowledge and expertise of the audience); and written communication basic proficiency (the ability to use the conventions of grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction and usage appropriate to the task and sufficient to convey effectively the author's ideas).

6. Advocacy of Legal Argument

Students will demonstrate the ability, in both oral and written formats, to evaluate the legal, economic and social strengths and weaknesses of a case and use case and statutory authority as well as public policy to persuade others. Making policy-based arguments includes the ability to identify and evaluate the public policies of a precedent case or rule and their implications, and be able to assert such appropriate arguments to support a particular application or distinction of a precedent case to a legal controversy or a particular resolution of the application of a rule to the legal controversy.

7. Client Sensitivity and Cultural Competency

Students will demonstrate an awareness of clients' needs and goals, including a sensitivity to clients' background and circumstances (including, but not limited to, socio-economic, gender, race, ethnicity, educational, disability and/or religious background(s)), the ability to make decisions that reflect an appropriate focus on those needs and goals, and awareness that cultural issues may affect the relevance of facts and application of the law.

8. Legal Ethics

Students will demonstrate the ability to identify ethical issues in law practice contexts and make appropriate decisions to resolve such issues.