

LAW-996: CD: Child, Family & State

In this course, we'll examine the socio-legal and neurobiological issues that arise when parents or other guardians and the state disagree about decisions involving the care, the conduct, disciplinary approaches, and the well-being of children. We'll also consider the dynamics that arise when children become old enough to take responsibility over their decisions in which the state and the parents take an interest, and when a guardian ad litem or other representative speaks for/as the child. Seminar issues may include: the allocation of power between parents and state; the authenticity of a child's voice; protecting children from abuse and neglect; adolescent (mental) health care; adoptions; and state-enforced limitation of the liberty of minors; juvenile delinquency. But we cannot best understand these issues, unless we also fold in the social, cultural, psychological, and neurobiological contexts, which form the multivariate factors in which parents and children live. Such factors suggest ecology, and apart from legal and interdisciplinary readings, we'll also read neuroscience, which tells us that the architecture of children's brain is positively affected by specific experiences of love and security, fear and threat. Likewise, a child's brain development can be negatively affected by early childhood adversities like loss, abandonment, fear, rejection, pain, violence, etc. Basically, then, these issues and factors flow from the earliest attachment experiences between caregivers and children, issues that remain throughout the adult's entire life. Accordingly, in this course, we'll take an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the issues and factors that affect families and the lives of parents and children.

Credits: 2

Program: Law