

Community College of Rhode Island
Criminal Justice & Legal Studies Department

Law of Torts

Course Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Daniel J. Donovan
Room 3081 Phone 825-2315
E-Mail: ddonovan@ccri.edu
Web Site: <http://www.donovanlegalstudies.com>

TEXT: Survey of R.I. Law of Torts
By Daniel J. Donovan, J.D.
First Edition

Course Summary

This course (Laws 2100) is a required course for Paralegal Studies majors, but may be taken by other students interested in this area of the law. The Law of Torts involves the study of civil wrongs which result in personal injury, property damage, or economic injuries. The course will deal with the areas of Negligence, Infliction of Emotional Distress, Premises Liability, Intentional & Strict Liability Torts, Vicarious Liability, and Defenses to Tort Actions.

The objective of this course is to provide paralegal students with information on an area of law that a great majority of law firms practice in. Most law firms deal with personal injury cases resulting from auto accidents, slip and fall situations, assaults, and the like. Some law firms deal with other tort areas such as Malpractice (Medical and other professions), Products Liability of manufacturers and retailers, and Premises Liability of property owners, landlords, and tenants. The student will be exposed to all of the above area during the course.

In comparison to the Law of Contracts, where persons are responsible for failing to live up to their voluntary contractual duties, the Law of Torts deals with legal duties imposed on all members of society. In general, persons are expected to operate in their daily affairs (such as driving a car) in a manner in which other persons will not be injured or their property will not be damaged. If a person breaches his or her duty and causes such an injury, then the law will find that person liable (responsible) for damages.

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Course Reading Assignments

- Chapter One: Development & Sources of Tort Law
- Chapter Two: Negligent Torts - The Concept of Duty
- Chapter Three: Negligent Torts - Breach of Duty & Causation
- Chapter Four: Infliction of Emotional Distress
- Chapter Five: Premises Liability of Owners & Occupiers of Land
- Chapter Six: Defenses to Tort Liability
- Chapter Seven: Intentional & Strict Liability Torts
- Chapter Eight: Vicarious & Statutory Liability

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Course Information and Requirements

Course Testing & Assignments: There will be three multiple choice tests given during the semester, and all three tests must be taken to complete the course. If all three tests are not taken, the student will receive a withdrawal for the course, unless the student has a valid excuse for not completing the tests and arranges with the instructor for an incomplete grade. There will also be two written assignments given during the semester.

Make-Up Tests: Make-up tests will be given for those who have missed a scheduled test. The make-up test must be taken within one week of the scheduled test unless a medical excuse is provided. If a make-up test is not taken at that time, a full grade will be deducted from the student's score on that test. No student will be allowed to take more than one make-up test a semester unless the student has a medical excuse or a family emergency proven to the instructor. If a student misses a second scheduled test without a valid reason, one full grade will be deducted from the student's score on that test.

Grading Policy: An average of 90 and above will be an "A"; 80 to 89 a "B"; 70 to 79 a "C", and 60 to 69 a "D". A grade average below "60" is a failing grade. Each of the three tests will count for one-fourth of the final course grade. The two written assignments will count for the remaining 25% of the grade.

Attendance Policy & Grading: The instructor will take attendance for all class sessions. Attendance will be used in grading in two ways. First, if a student's grade is borderline between two grade levels, a good attendance record in that case would result in the student receiving the higher of the two grades. Second, any student who misses more than three weeks worth of the scheduled class sessions will have their final grade for the course reduced by one full grade level (for example from a "B" to a "C"), and any student who misses five weeks worth of the scheduled class sessions will receive a withdrawal for the course. Each evening class session, which meets only once a week, will be counted as two classes. If a student leaves an evening class after a break, this will be counted as one absence.

Voice Mail & E-Mail: If a student needs to get in touch with the instructor, he or she may leave a voice mail message at 825-2315 at the Warwick Campus of CCRI. The instructor's office is in Room 3081 at the CCRI Warwick Campus. The instructor's e-mail address is: ddonovan@ccri.edu. Use of e-mail is encouraged as it is easier for the instructor to respond to the student's question or request at any time.

Classroom Behavior: It is the responsibility of the instructor to protect the learning environment in the classroom from disruptive behavior for the benefit of all of the students in the class. Examples of disruptive behavior include: sleeping in class, talking between students or passing notes, excessive or chronic lateness, grandstanding, use of pagers, cell phones, or beepers (which shall be turned off or set on vibrate during class), verbal or physical threats, and derogatory language. The instructor reserves the right to ask a student to leave class due to disruptive behavior, eject a student from the course, or mark down a student's grade as may be appropriate for the circumstances in the sole discretion of the instructor.

About the Instructor: Professor Daniel J. Donovan holds a law degree (Juris Doctor) from Rutgers Law School in New Jersey. Prior to law school, he received a degree in political science from Villanova University in Pennsylvania. He was admitted to practice as a lawyer in Rhode Island in 1972. He was involved in continuing legal education for lawyers for 12 years and authored several books and pamphlets for lawyers including "Title Searching in Rhode Island" and "R.I. Landlord & Tenant Law". Your instructor has taught at CCRI full time since 1989 teaching business law, paralegal studies, and law enforcement courses, and had previously taught part-time at CCRI and other colleges. Your instructor is the author of four other textbooks: Legal Research in Rhode Island, Survey of the Law of Property & Estates, Civil Procedure for R.I. Paralegals, and Introduction to Paralegal Studies.