

Family law and family psychology CSALÁDJOG ÉS CSALÁDP SZICHOLÓGIA					
Responsible unit (institute/department): Civil Law Department	Number of lessons per week/semester: 2	Credit value: 6 ECTS		Prerequisites:	Prerequisite for exam:
Lecturer in charge of the subject: Katalin Visontai-Szabó	Type of course: elective	Recommended semester: Spring	Semester in which the course is offered: Spring	Language of instruction: English	Type of evaluation: comprehensive exam
Lecturer(s): Katalin Visontai-Szabó					Method of evaluation: oral and written
Description of professional content and purpose of the course:					
This course aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of the legal and psychological dimensions of family relationships, focusing on the protection and well-being of children and families in conflict situations. Students will learn to analyze and apply principles of family law—including parental responsibility, divorce, and custody decisions—alongside psychological knowledge about child development, family dynamics, and the emotional impact of separation and domestic violence.					
Short outline, description of acquired knowledge, skills and competences:					
During the semester, the course provides a balanced combination of theoretical instruction and practical application through lectures, case studies, role-playing exercises, and group discussions. The total workload is divided into theoretical lessons (approximately 60%) and practical sessions (approximately 40%), corresponding to 14 weeks of instruction. <div><div>1.</div><div>Introduction to Hungarian Family Law</div></div> <div><div>2.</div><div>Introduction to family psychology</div></div> <div><div>3.</div><div>Marriage and cohabitation – legal consequences</div></div> <div><div>4.</div><div>Kinship</div></div> <div><div>5.</div><div>Parental responsibility</div></div> <div><div>6.</div><div>Legal background of divorce</div></div> <div><div>7.</div><div>Psychological consequences of divorce</div></div> <div><div>8.</div><div>Children’s rights during divorce and the child’s best interest</div></div> <div><div>9.</div><div>Child custody evaluation and decisions</div></div> <div><div>10.</div><div>Parental alienation</div></div> <div><div>11.</div><div>Domestic violence and child protective measures</div></div> <div><div>12.</div><div>Mediation and other alternative dispute resolutions</div></div>					
Requirements during the semester and teaching methods:					
Lectures: Presentation and discussion of key concepts, legal frameworks, and psychological theories related to family law and child welfare.					
Guided Discussions: In-depth analysis of legal cases and psychological research to encourage critical thinking and debate.					
Case Studies: Examination of real or simulated family disputes to apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts.					
Role-Playing and Simulations: Practice of interviewing children, mediation between parents, and courtroom procedures to enhance professional communication skills.					
Compulsory sources/reading, bibliography, available sources for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences:					
Harman, J. J., Matthewson, M., & Talwar, V. (eds.) (2022). Parental Alienation. Routledge / Taylor & Francis. DOI: 10.4324/9780367198459-REPRW54-1 (publisher page and book record).					
Zumbach, J., Villalón, E., & Zappella, E. (2022). International perspectives on guidelines and policies for child custody and maltreatment risk assessments. Frontiers in Psychology, 13:900058. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.900058. (Comparative, international empirical review relevant to custody practice).					
Edward Elgar (ed.). (2022). Advanced Introduction to Children’s Rights. Edward Elgar Publishing. ISBN: 9781789900293 (paperback, 2022) — a concise, recent legal perspective useful on children’s rights topics.					

Benyusz, M. (ed.) (2024). International Children's Rights. Central European Academy Publishing (CEA). ISBNs listed on publisher page: 9786156474704 / 9786156474698 / 9786156474711 (2024). Useful for regional/international policy comparisons and teaching materials.

American Psychological Association. (2010). Guidelines for Child Custody Evaluations in Family Law Proceedings. American Psychologist, 65(9), 863–867. DOI: 10.1037/a0021250. (Essential professional guideline used internationally as a standard; available from APA site / PubMed.)

Bricklin, B. — The Custody Evaluation Handbook: Research-Based Solutions and Applications (book listing / course-book; edition and publisher details on publisher/retailer pages). (Widely used textbook for practical custody evaluation training; see publisher/retailer record).

Humphreys, C., & Stanley, N. (eds.) Domestic Violence and Child Protection: Directions for Good Practice. Jessica Kingsley / Routledge (publisher listing). ISBN (example listing): 1843102765. (Practice-oriented book connecting domestic violence and child protection; classic text with updated practice guidance).
Jessica Kingsley Publishers - UK

UNICEF / United Nations. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) — official text and teaching/digital materials (UNICEF web pages and downloadable PDF text and children's version). (Core international treaty text for children's rights, child participation and voice; recommended as digital course material).

Recommended additional sources/reading:

Hine, B. (2025). Examining the Prevalence and Impact of Parental Behaviours (parental alienation behaviours). Journal article (Springer) — 2025; DOI and article page on Springer. (Recent empirical study on parental alienation / PABs — important for the newest research results).

Heggdalsvik, I. K. (2022). Family counselors' professional assessments when children are at potential risk. International Journal / Journal article record. (Empirical study on professional assessments and child risk — useful recent research for practice-oriented assignments and class discussion).

Exam topics and/or questions:

The course prepares future professionals to:

- Evaluate and make informed decisions in **child custody** and **parental responsibility** cases.
- Promote and safeguard **children's rights** and encourage their **participation** in legal and psychological processes.
- Understand and address the **psychological consequences of divorce, parental alienation, and family conflict**.
- Distinguish between **sole** and **joint custody** arrangements and their implications for the child's welfare.
- Integrate legal and psychological perspectives to support families ethically and effectively in judicial and counseling context

a) Knowledge

- Understands the **legal framework** governing family relations, including parental responsibility, divorce, custody, and children's rights.
- Possesses **theoretical knowledge** of family psychology, child development, and the psychological effects of family breakdown.
- Recognizes the principles of **child participation** and the child's right to be heard in legal and psychological procedures.
- Is familiar with **methods of custody evaluation**, risk assessment in domestic violence, and evidence-based decision-making.
- Understands **interdisciplinary cooperation** between legal, psychological, and social service professionals in family-related cases.

b) Skills

- Applies legal and psychological knowledge to analyze and resolve complex family disputes.
- Conducts or interprets **child custody evaluations** in accordance with professional and ethical standards.
- Communicates effectively and sensitively with children, parents, and professionals in family conflict situations.
- Integrates legal reasoning with psychological assessment findings to support child-centered decisions.
- Prepares and presents professional reports, summaries, and opinions in family law contexts.

c) Attitude

- Demonstrates **empathy, impartiality, and respect** for the dignity and rights of all family members, especially children.
- Values **interdisciplinary collaboration** and the integration of psychological and legal perspectives.
- Maintains a **child-centered, ethical, and human rights–based** approach in all professional actions.
- Shows openness to continuous learning, reflective practice, and evidence-based improvement.

d) Autonomy and Responsibility

- Acts responsibly and independently within professional and legal frameworks when making or supporting family-related decisions.
- Recognizes professional limits and seeks supervision or collaboration when needed in complex or sensitive cases.
- Demonstrates accountability for the **well-being and protection of children** in all interventions.
- Exercises professional judgment while adhering to ethical standards, confidentiality, and legal obligations.

Notes (e.g. special device, student number limits): maximum 15 students