

**Family law and family psychology  
ERP 6319**

**CSALÁDJOG ÉS CSALÁDP SZICHOLOGIA**

<b>Responsible unit (institute/department):</b> Civil Law Department	<b>Number of lessons per week/semester:</b> Full time: 2/12	<b>Credit value:</b> 6	<b>Type of contact hours:</b> practice	<b>Prerequisites:</b> -	<b>Prerequisite for exam:</b> -
<b>Lecturer in charge of the subject:</b> Katalin Visontai-Szabó	<b>Type of course:</b> Erasmus course	<b>Recommended semester:</b> Spring	<b>Semester in which the course is offered:</b> Spring	<b>Language of instruction:</b> English	<b>Type of evaluation:</b> comprehensive exam
<b>Lecturer(s):</b> Katalin Visontai-Szabó					<b>Method of evaluation:</b> 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.

1. Introduction to Hungarian Family Law
2. Introduction to family psychology
3. Marriage and cohabitation – legal consequences
4. Kinship
5. Parental responsibility
6. Legal background of divorce
7. Psychological consequences of divorce
8. Children’s rights during divorce and the child’s best interest
9. Child custody evaluation and decisions
10. Parental alienation
11. Domestic violence and child protective measures
12. Mediation and other alternative dispute resolutions

***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:***

Katalin Visontai-Szabó: Legal background and practical issues of compulsory parental support - Central European Civil Law Studies 2024. Nagyvárad

Katalin Visontai-Szabó: Recent modifications in the Hungarian Civil Code to ensure the child’s best interest. In.: Central European Legal Studies – Selected Essays on Actual Legal Issues from a Comparative Legal Approach 2023.

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)

***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.

Heggdalsvik, I. K. (2022). Family counselors’ professional assessments when children are at potential risk. International Journal / Journal article record.

Harman, J. J., Matthewson, M., & Talwar, V. (eds.) (2022). Parental Alienation. Routledge / Taylor & Francis. DOI: 10.4324/9780367198459-REPRW54-1

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.

Edward Elgar (ed.). (2022). *Advanced Introduction to Children’s Rights*. Edward Elgar Publishing. ISBN: 9781789900293 (paperback, 2022)

Benyusz, M. (ed.) (2024). *International Children’s Rights*. Central European Academy Publishing (CEA). ISBNs listed on publisher page: 9786156474704 / 9786156474698 / 9786156474711 (2024).

American Psychological Association. (2010). Guidelines for Child Custody Evaluations in Family Law Proceedings. *American Psychologist*, 65(9), 863–867. DOI: 10.1037/a0021250.

Bricklin, B. — *The Custody Evaluation Handbook: Research-Based Solutions and Applications*

Humphreys, C., & Stanley, N. (eds.) *Domestic Violence and Child Protection: Directions for Good Practice*. Jessica Kingsley

***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

**Competences to be Acquired**

**a. Knowledge**

The graduate:

- Is familiar with the main rules of Hungarian law (including agricultural law and cooperative law), European and international law, and the most important constitutional and judicial decisions.
- Knows the main sources of law and the specific regulatory and operational logic of various legal fields, including specialised legal terminologies.
- Is familiar with the methods of case analysis and legal reasoning.
- Possesses knowledge of document management, legal drafting, and the specific elements and techniques of legal writing.

**b. Skills**

The graduate:

- Uses specialised legal terminologies with confidence.
- Can apply legal principles and values broadly, beyond the core curriculum.
- Understands social problems, can analyse new phenomena and think critically.
- Recognises legal and social problems and is willing to seek solutions.
- Can express personal views in legal and social matters and accepts others' viewpoints; can articulate arguments clearly and convincingly, using persuasive techniques.
- Recognises social, ethical and professional dilemmas and is able to analyse and synthesise them.
- Can assess the significance of legal conflicts, identify solutions, evaluate consequences and consider alternatives.
- Uses legal terminology clearly and professionally; can explain complex legal issues in an understandable manner.

**c. Attitudes**

The graduate:

- Is committed to lifelong learning and acquiring new knowledge.
- Is willing to integrate non-legal perspectives into problem-solving.
- Rejects phenomena and practices that undermine human dignity, human rights and rule-of-law principles, and seeks tools to address such issues.
- Is committed to equal treatment and its practical implementation.
- Is open to mediation and facilitating communication between conflicting parties.
- Is committed to high-quality, precise professional work.

**d. Autonomy and Responsibility**

The graduate:

- Assumes initiative in professional and public affairs and is willing to take personal responsibility and make decisions.
- Reflects on their own work and its consequences; accepts and integrates feedback and seeks opportunities for improvement.
- Uses advocacy tools in a value-driven manner.
- Works independently and precisely; strives for formal clarity in written and oral tasks

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