
From: Suzanne Valdez - suzmac@ku.edu <do-not-reply@ku.edu>

Sent: Wednesday, January 6, 2021 9:22 PM

Subject: 2020Fall-LAW 969 State Court Practice LEC (4209-25744): State Court Practice Grades - will not be posted, please read announcement

Hello, All,

I write this email with a heavy heart, both because of what has transpired today at our Nation's capital and, sadly, because my hand has been forced by Dean Stephen Mazza to withhold your final grades in State Court Practice until a contract dispute between myself and Dean Mazza is resolved. I am sorry about both of these events today because I have been hopeful for a more positive and transformative 2021.

I am very disappointed and heartbroken about the threat to our 200+ year-old democracy that occurred today in our Country, and I can see no rational explanation for it. As mother of a son who is on active duty in the Army, and myself soon to be an elected public official, I am angry that our Nation's democracy could even be in question. Please know that I too struggle with these shameful and traumatic events, and I hope that you will take advantage of any and all support that is available to you during these trying times.

On a more local level, I unfortunately but importantly must share with you why your grades in State Court Practice are not yet entered. Your work for the course is done, as is my teaching and grading of your work.

As you are aware, the deadline for entering law school grades is today, January 6. At the end of the fall 2020 semester, the law school refused to pay me according to the terms of an agreement I had with Dean Mazza because I have been elected as DA for Douglas County and will assume that position on January 11, 2021.

Thus, I have no recourse but to withhold entering your final grades until Dean Mazza pays me what the agreement makes clear I am owed for teaching the course. Dean Mazza refused to make that payment at the end of the semester, and he continues to refuse to do so. I am very, very sorry about this, but Dean Mazza bears full responsibility for this situation. He has not paid me what I am owed under the agreement, a mere pittance in comparison to what he has over the years regularly paid to tenure track faculty like candy, whether for summer "research grants" or taking on an additional course during the academic year. I have given the Dean more than ample opportunity to make this right, but he has adamantly refused.

This is an unfortunate teaching moment - one not fair for you to be learning in this moment, but one that is a reality nonetheless: contractual disputes may result in collateral consequences to innocence parties. Again, I am so very sorry about this.

All day I have thought about simply caving in and posting your final grade, allowing the Dean and University to impose injustice, because I care so deeply and personally about all of you as my students. But if I did that, what ultimately would I be teaching and demonstrating by my actions? That the powers that be, mostly privileged white men, once again get their way and refuse to acknowledge the contributions and merit of women and minorities? I cannot do that. Women faculty, and specifically female clinical faculty at the KU Law School (and women for years have predominated in clinical and lawyering positions, but not on the tenure track faculty), have been far underpaid compared to male faculty. As a matter of principle, I cannot allow Dean Mazza to take advantage. Until the law school pays me what it promised for honest and now completed work, I feel I have no choice but to withhold the final grades in this course, much as it pains me to do because of all of you.

Finally, as students, you are not powerless to weigh in on these issues. You paid your tuition and you deserve to receive your final grades. But it is Dean Mazza and the University, not me, who are preventing that from happening. I stand prepared to enter your grades in State Court Practice when Dean Mazza pays me for my work.

For now, I apologize once again, and I apologize for the people, like Dean Mazza, who have put me in this horrible situation.

Take care,

Suzanne Valdez

Connell Teaching Chair

Clinical Professor of Law