

**Community College of Rhode Island  
Criminal Justice & Legal Studies Department**

## **Law of Property & Estates Course Syllabus**

Instructor: Dr. Daniel J. Donovan  
Room 3081 Phone 825-2315  
E-Mail: [ddonovan@ccri.edu](mailto:ddonovan@ccri.edu)  
Website: <http://www.donovanlegalstudies.com>

TEXT: Survey of the Law of Property & Estates  
By: Daniel J. Donovan, J.D. (First Edition)

### Course Summary

This course involves a study of the law relating to three areas: personal property, real property, and decedents' estates. The course will start with a general introduction to the legal concept of private property as it currently exists in this country. Personal property law will then be covered and will include: tangible and intangible property ownership and use; proprietary property (trademarks, trade secrets, and trade names); and intellectual property (copyrights and patents). It will also include a study of the law on bank account ownership, gifts, and transfers to minors. Next, decedents' estates will be addressed. The law of decedents' estates includes wills, inheritance, probate, and trusts, along with a discussion of federal and state taxation of estates. The last part of the course deals with real property. Real property law includes the ownership and use of real estate, fixtures, easements, co-ownership, adverse possession, and deeds, plus a review of the typical steps in the transfer of real estate. The segment on real property will also include study of the law relating to landlord-tenant relationships and leases, together with coverage of the provisions of the R.I. Residential Landlord and Tenant Act.

The objective of the course is to have the student become familiar with and understand the legal terms and the basic legal concepts used in the three areas of the law being studied, so that the student will be able to comprehend and deal with the impact of these areas of the law on his or her personal and business life.

The Law of Property and Estates is a required course for Paralegal Studies majors. Law Enforcement and Business Administration majors may take Law of Property & Estates as an elective.

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### Course Reading Assignments

Introduction to Property Law Concepts:	Chapter 1
Co-ownership of Property	Chapter 2
Divorce & Property	Chapter 3
Types of Personal Property	Chapter 4
(TEST ON CHAPTERS 1 to 4)	
Gifts, Bank Accounts & Transfers to Minors	Chapter 5
Wills, Trusts, & Inheritance	Chapter 9
Living Wills & Powers of Appointment	Chapter 10
Probating a Decedent's Estate	Chapter 11
(TEST ON CHAPTERS 5, 9, 10 & 11)	
Real Property Ownership & Mortgages	Chapter 6
Real Property Transfers: Deeds, Recording, etc.	Chapter 7
Landlord and Tenant Law	Chapter 8
(TEST ON CHAPTERS 6 to 8)	

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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](mailto: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.