

USC Gould

School of Law

“The Trauma-Informed Lawyer: Learning the Skills to Represent Trauma Survivors and Address Vicarious Trauma”

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“When juvenile justice systems do not understand trauma, children experiencing trauma are put into a system that traumatizes them further. When prosecutors and defense attorneys do not understand trauma, victims of crime end up behind bars, and labeled a criminal. When family law and personal injury lawyers do not understand vicarious trauma, they experience significant burnout, mental health and substance abuse problems without knowing these issues are rooted in vicarious trauma.” - Jamie Beck

Units: 1 Unit

Section 1 Term—Day—Time: Fall October 27 (3PM-6PM), 28 (9AM-5PM), & 29 (9AM-12PM)

Section 2 Term—Day—Time: Fall November 3 (3PM-6PM), 4 (9AM-5PM), & 5 (9AM-12PM)

Location: Room 2

Instructors: Jamie Beck, J. D., & Brittany Greenbaum, Ph.D.

Office: Virtual Office

Office Hours: Email to schedule

Contact Info: Jamie@FreeToThrive.Org; Brittany@ATraumaHealingCenter.Com

Grading System: Course will be CR/D/F

Course Description

This course will provide an introduction of trauma and trauma-informed practice within the legal field. Attorneys who practice family law, criminal law, public interest law, personal injury, employment, bankruptcy, trust & estates, civil rights **all work with trauma survivors**. Many others may deal indirectly with traumatic events and issues such as environmental, healthcare, and appellate lawyers. This is the majority of lawyers in the legal profession. Yet very few are trained on the skills necessary to effectively and healthily work with survivors of trauma, for both the attorney and client mental health.

Over the 3-day course, students will learn about mental health, trauma, trauma-informed practices, and vicarious trauma and will consider how mental health struggles and experiences of trauma impact a person’s behaviors and attorney-client relationships. Students will be encouraged to utilize a trauma-informed lens and approach to help decrease re-traumatization of clients, set appropriate boundaries, and build healthier and more productive working relationships. Students will be provided information on how to create a trauma-informed case strategy and tips for managing clients’ trauma in court.

Students will also be engaged in discussions of how trauma functions within the legal system and how activist movements have responded to injustices *within* the justice system and *through use of* the justice system. Lastly, students will be assisted in building a “Transforming Vicarious Trauma” plan to help decrease experiences of burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

Learning Outcomes

- Be able to name the different components of a trauma-informed practice and how they can be implemented in the practice of law
- Be aware of vicarious trauma and develop a personal “Transforming Vicarious Trauma” plan
- Possess an increased level of skill and confidence in working with survivors of trauma at every stage of your case
- Have a basic understanding of how trauma can occur within the justice system while also providing opportunities to fight injustice
- Increase knowledge of the ways our social structures of inequality can cause trauma to marginalized communities

Prerequisite(s); co-requisite(s), or recommended preparation:

N/A

Required Materials (e.g., textbooks or other)

Free to Thrive’s Trauma-Informed Practice Guide (Posted in Blackboard)

Assignments

1. *Nightly reading starting the Thursday before the course (three nights of reading)*
2. *Transforming Vicarious Trauma Plan Worksheet (Due two weeks after the course—Section 1: Nov. 12; Section 2: Nov. 19)*
3. *Trauma-Informed Principles Worksheet: Write 3 to 5 sentences about the purpose and/or value of each principle (personally, professionally, legally, and/or socially) and create 3 implementation or action ideas for the principle and explain how it applies to it (Due two weeks after the course—Section 1: Nov. 12; Section 2: Nov. 19)*
4. *In Class Assignments:*
 - a. *Trauma-Informed case studies in small groups*
 - b. *Role playing client-attorney situations*

Participation

Active class participation is strongly encouraged. The course will be interactive in nature.

Grading System: Course will be CR/D/F

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments can be submitted through Blackboard or may be emailed to BOTH professors. All Assignments are due two weeks after the course has ended.

Grading Timeline

All assignments will be graded by the end of the semester.

Course-Specific Policies

Common course-specific policies include policies regarding student conduct (e.g., professional behavior), participation in class work, use of technology in the classroom, penalties for late work, and attendance.

Note that regular and punctual attendance is an important part of the learning process and is necessary to satisfy residence and class hours requirements. Although application of this policy is left to the judgment of each instructor, many faculty use a general standard which allows a student to miss one class session per course unit-hour without an excuse. Some faculty require students to meet specific attendance requirements in order to receive a passing grade for the course.

A student whose attendance is not regular and punctual may be withdrawn from enrollment at the discretion of the Dean of Students and the instructor. Instructors are permitted to announce additional attendance requirements and penalties for their classes.

ATTENDANCE

All students are expected to show up to class alert and on time, and to remain for the duration of the session. Given the short timeframe of the course, full attendance is required to receive a passing grade.

LATE WORK

All assignments are required to be submitted on their respective due dates. Please contact your instructors if there is ever a legitimate reason for why an assignment cannot be completed or submitted by the due date so that we can make arrangements for how to best finish the work.

COVID-19 CONCERNS

If you are feeling ill or exhibiting any of the symptoms of COVID-19, please let your instructors know and contact your health care provider immediately. **DO NOT ATTEND CLASS.** Given the danger to yourself and others, policies concerning late work and attendance can be amended when dealing with COVID-19. Your health and safety, and the health and safety of those around you, is paramount to any assignment or class session.

CLASS NORMS

The following norms are expected to be observed at all times by all class participants. During this course we will be discussing issues of trauma and various other topics of potential contention. Not only will observing these norms help ensure a safe and productive space for all, but will also promote a *brave space*—a space in which we can learn and grow as a community by confronting our limitations in a respectful environment. We learn the most when we focus our mental faculties on ideas and skills of which we are ignorant. However, this learning cannot occur if we assume an expertise we do not possess, or maintain a certainty that is unwarranted. Acknowledging ignorance is crucial

to obtaining wisdom. But this requires a great deal of vulnerability, and this cannot be accomplished without ensuring a safe, brave space for expression and debate. The following norms will assist in maintaining such an environment, while also providing us with practice for how to engage in the world as critical and compassionate participants.

- Respect each other's opinions.
- Be open minded, even if you don't agree. Try to understand where that person is coming from.
- Be respectful to the person rather than react negatively. Don't make it personal (discuss ideas, not people). Keep the human element in mind.
- Practice active listening: be engaged when someone is speaking to you or the group. Be prepared to comment or reply. Practice eye contact, nod.
- Let others be engaged: don't interrupt, let others share their whole opinion. (Are you done? Should we move on?)
- Use appropriate language.
- Treat people how you want to be treated. Use proper etiquette.
- Rephrasing: moving on is better than silence, don't be afraid to be a devil's advocate.
- NO targeting or bigoted, racist, and/or sexist expressions of any kind—this includes language (whether verbal or textual), nonverbal gestures or attire, or any form of demeanor that is designed to intimidate, isolate, or otherwise harm a fellow class member.

Use of AI Text Generation Tools Is Not Permitted

Except where expressly permitted by the instructor, all work submitted for this course, including exams and papers, must be completed by you, personally. Use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to generate text as part of preparing your work is strictly prohibited. Submission or presentation of material generated by AI, including summarizing, paraphrasing, or editing such material, will be considered a violation of Academic Integrity. For additional information, please refer to the Academic Integrity and Plagiarism portions of the Gould Student Handbook and the USC Student Handbook.

Class Recordings: Privacy and Sharing

Course lectures and discussions are sometimes recorded or live-streamed. These are only available to students registered for the course and the intellectual property of the faculty member. These materials may not be shared or reproduced without the explicit written consent of the instructors. Students may not share these recordings with those who are not enrolled in the course; likewise, students may not upload recordings to any other online environment. Doing so is a breach of the Code of Student Conduct and could be a violation of the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Communication: Free Expression

USC supports and upholds the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech and the principle of academic freedom to foster a learning environment where open inquiry and the vigorous debate of a diversity of ideas are encouraged. Students will not be penalized for the content or viewpoints of their speech if student expression in a class context is germane to the subject matter of the class and is conveyed in an appropriate manner.

Course Evaluations

At the end of the semester, you will have the opportunity to complete a course evaluation. We would greatly appreciate your completing of the evaluation because we value your feedback and will use it to continue improving the course.

Course Schedule: A Daily Breakdown

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Assignment Dates
Hour 1 (Day 1)	Overview of mental health and trauma	Reading Free to Thrive's Trauma-Informed Practice Guide, pages 1-23	
Hour 2 (Day 1)	The impact of trauma on your client Challenges of living with the impacts of trauma		
Hour 3 (Day 1)	Societal trauma, social justice and the justice system		
Hour 4 (Day 2)	Impact of trauma on your cases	Reading Free to Thrive's Trauma-Informed Practice Guide, pages 23-35	
Hour 5 (Day 2)	Case studies		
Hour 6 (Day 2)	Working with trauma survivors		
Hour 7 (Day 2)	Role-play exercise – trauma-informed interviewing		
Hour 8 (day 2)	Trauma-informed case strategy		
Hour 9 (day 2)	Trauma-informed court practices		
Hour 10 (day 2)	Role-play exercise –Trauma-informed court practices		
Hour 11 (day 2)	Trauma-informed court practices		
Hour 12 (Day 3)	Vicarious trauma: the impact of working with trauma survivors	Reading Free to Thrive's Trauma-Informed Practice Guide, pages 36-43	
Hour 13 (Day 3)	Transforming vicarious trauma	Transforming vicarious trauma plan (in class)	
Hour 14 (Day 3)	Envisioning a more trauma-informed justice system and restoring ourselves		

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be emailed to the Student Affairs office, and to ensure anonymity where possible, the Student Affairs office will communicate with faculty as needed. For classroom accommodations, the student can work directly with faculty to determine how best to implement the modification. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu. You can also contact Student Affairs for more information about accommodations in the law school (studentcare@law.usc.edu).

Support Systems:

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

Gould-specific information can be found at <https://gould.usc.edu/about/race-equity/> (Law, Race and Equity page) and <https://gould.usc.edu/students/diversity/> Students can submit anonymous EDI-related comments/complaints through the law portal:

<https://mylaw2.usc.edu/about/contact/anonymous-comments>