

Course Master Syllabus Legal Research - LGLA 1303

(Note: The actual syllabus will vary depending upon the Instructor)

I. Course Description / Prerequisites

This course provides a working knowledge of the fundamentals of effective legal research. Topics include law library techniques, computer assisted legal research, briefs, and legal memoranda.

II. Course Rationale / Objectives

This course is designed to provide the student with an in-depth understanding of the use and evaluation of the legal sources found in a well-equipped law library, as well as the efficient use of Westlaw and other online sources. The student will develop a preliminary understanding of legal memoranda.

III. Student Learning Outcomes

A. Course-Level Student Learning Outcomes

The student will be able to apply a knowledge of the structure of federal and state court systems in the United States, an understanding of the doctrine of stare decisis, and the ability to distinguish between primary and secondary sources of legal authority, to locate and identify legal sources that would be binding, in contrast to merely persuasive, to a specific court, as it decides issues of law as applied to the facts of a case before it. The student will be able to perform the basic steps of effective legal research.

A. Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes

- (1) Students will identify relevant legal concepts and apply them to changing fact patterns.
- (2) Students will draft documents used in a broad range of legal environments.
- (3) Students will perform as entry-level paralegals in a broad range of legal environments.
- (4) Students will perform legal research.

B. SCANS Competencies

The SCANS Competencies that will be developed in this Course are listed on Exhibit A.

IV. Required/Recommended Texts

A. Required (Check for current edition or changes)

1. Barkan, Mersky and Dunn, Legal Research Illustrated
2. Barkan, Mersky and Dunn, Assignments to Fundamentals of Legal Research, and Legal Research Illustrated
3. Harvard Law Review, The Blue Book: A Uniform System of Citation

4. Texas Law Review, Texas Rules of Form

B. Recommended

1. Black's Law Dictionary
2. A legal thesaurus

V. **Instructional Methodology**

This course will be taught via a combined lecture and Socratic method format. Students will be expected to have absorbed the assigned material prior to class and be able to respond to questions on the assigned material. In addition, students will complete assignments using various legal research sources in a law library as well as Westlaw and other online sources.

VI. **Course Evaluation System**

A. Total course points will be computed as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Homework | -----60 points |
| 2. Research Notebook | -----15 points |
| 3. Final Exam | -----15 points |
| 4. Participation | -----10 points |
| TOTAL POINTS | -----100 POINTS |

B. The final letter grade in the course will be based on the points earned as follows:

- A = 90-100 points
B = 80-89 points
C = 70-79 points
D = 60-69 points
F = 0-59 points

C. Homework:

At the end of each class the student will receive a worksheet consisting of problems from the material covered in that class. The worksheet is always due at the beginning of the next class session unless the instructor specifically states otherwise. The two lowest homework grades will automatically be dropped for each student. The student should try working all the problems independently before asking for help. The student may ask the librarians, each other, or the instructor for help. The student can find local law libraries at the following locations:

Tarleton Law Library (471-7726): located at the western edge of the University of Texas School of Law at 727 East Dean Keeton Street. Hours vary, so check the website or call first. <http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/>

State Law Library (463-1722): located in the Tom C. Clark Bldg., 205 W. 14th Street, Rm G01, Austin, TX 78701-1614. Hours are 8 am-5 pm, M-F. <http://www.sll.state.tx.us> .

Travis County Law Library (854-8677): Located on the first floor of the Ned Granger Building at 11th and Guadalupe. Ned Granger Building, 314 West 11th Street, Suite 140 Austin, Texas 78701 Hours are 8 am - 5 pm, M-F.
http://www.co.travis.tx.us/records_communication/law_library/default.asp

VII. Course Policies

A. Attendance/Class Participation

Regular and punctual class attendance is expected of all students. Online courses require regular and timely class participation in discussions and completion of work. If attendance or compliance with other course policies is unsatisfactory, the instructor may withdraw students from the class.

In the event the college or campus closes due to unforeseen circumstances (for example, severe weather or other emergency), the student is responsible for communicating with their professor during the closure and completing any assignments or other activities designated by their professor as a result of class cancellations.

B. Classroom Policies

Each instructor should clearly express their classroom policies, expectations and procedures addressing a variety of issues addressing, among others, attendance, class participation, classroom behavior, missed or late exams, late homework, written assignments, PowerPoint presentations, field and online research activities and weight assigned to them. Having explicit detail in this section helps to resolve potential student grades issues.

C. Withdrawal Policy

Each student is responsible to ensure that his or her name is removed from the rolls should they decide to withdraw from the class. The instructor does, however, reserve the right to drop a student should he or she feels it is necessary. If a student decides to withdraw, he or she should also verify that the withdrawal is recorded before the Final Withdrawal Date. The Final Withdrawal Date for this semester is [insert date here]. The student is also strongly encouraged to keep any paperwork in case a problem arises.

Students are responsible for understanding the impact that withdrawal from a course may have on their financial aid, veterans' benefits, and or international student status. Per state law, students enrolling for the first time in Fall 2007 or later at any public Texas college or university may not withdraw (receive a W) from more than six courses during their undergraduate college education. Some exemptions for good cause could allow a student to withdraw from a course without having it count toward this limit. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with an advisor when making decisions about course selection, course loads, and course withdrawals.

D. Missed Exam and Late Work Policies

Each instructor should clearly express their policies with regard to missed exams and or late homework, etc.

E. Incompletes

An “Incomplete” will not be granted in this course unless the student has a grade of “C” or better on the first two exams, and a demonstrable emergency. An incomplete grade cannot be carried beyond the date established by the instructor and cannot in any event be carried later than the last withdrawal date the following semester

F. Course Outline/Calendar

Please note that schedule changes may occur during the semester. Any changes will be announced in class and posted appropriately.

VIII. College Policies and Student Support Services

Important College Policies and Student Support Services can be found at:

<http://www.austincc.edu/offices/academic-outcomes-assessment/master-syllabi/college-policies>

LEGAL DISCLAIMER

Everything that is discussed in the classroom or individually with the instructor is strictly for educational purposes only. The instructor will not and does not provide legal advice to any student. Nor shall any comments from the instructor be considered legal advice.

ATTACHMENT A
LEGAL RESEARCH – LGLA 1303
SCANs Competencies

Students in this Course will be expected to use or achieve the following Competencies:

Resources

- 1.1 Allocates Times: Allocates time between coursework/work/family/friends.

Interpersonal

- 2.1 Participates as a Member of a Team: Works cooperatively with others on joint assignments.
- 2.2 Teaches Others: Explains concepts in class
- 2.6 Works with Cultural Diversity: Works well with men and women and with a variety of ethnic, social, or educational backgrounds in the context of the class.

Information

- 3.1 Acquires and Evaluates Information: Extracts crucial legal issues from court cases and other sources.
- 3.2 Organizes and Maintains Information: Takes notes on assigned material for use in class. Develops a Research Notebook for use in future research assignments.
- 3.3 Interprets and Communicates Information: Evaluates assigned material and explains it to class.
- 3.4 Uses Computers to Process Information: Uses computers to process course notes, and to access various legal sources via Westlaw or the internet.

Technology

- 5.2 Applies Technology to Task: Understands the overall intent and the proper procedures for setting up and using computers and their programs, particularly Westlaw.

Basic Skills

- 6.1 Reading: Locates, understands, and interprets written information in the text and in various legal research sources.
- 6.2 Writing: Communicates thoughts, ideas, information, and messages effectively in writing.
- 6.5 Listening: Receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages during class lectures and discussions.
- 6.6 Speaking: Organizes ideas and effectively communicates thoughts when being questioned in class and during class discussions.

Thinking Skills

- 7.1 Creative Thinking: Uses imagination freely, combines ideas in new ways, when discussing hypothetical problems and when locating sources material for legal documents.
- 7.2 Decision Making: Chooses the best alternative in multiple choice questions.
- 7.3 Problem Solving: Recognizes problems in hypothetical situations and identifies possible solutions.
- 7.5 Knowing How to Learn: Finds the important information in class discussions and texts and consolidates the information into a useable format.

- 7.6 Reasoning: Identifies the crucial issues in a research question and recognizes what research choices will be best to answer the issues.

Personal Qualities

- 8.1 Responsibility: Exerts a high level of effort and perseverance in effectively preparing for class and class discussions.
- 8.4 Self-Management: Motivates self through goal achievement; exhibits self-control and responds to feedback unemotionally and non-defensively, is a “self-starter.”
- 8.5 Integrity/Honesty: Can be trusted to accomplish his/her own work without excessive involvement of other students.

This Syllabus was updated 11.7.2022