

COURSE SYLLABUS

POLITICAL SCIENCE 223: LEGAL RESEARCH (3 semester hours)

Tuesdays, 7:20 – 10:00 PM
EDS – 101 (Commerce Campus)
Rock – 143 (Rockwall Campus)

Instructor: Professor April Pitts
Office Location: SS – 163
Office Hours: M 6:30 PM – 7:00 PM (except intern meeting days)
T 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM
W 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM
R 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM
(or by appointment)
Phone: (903)886-5310
Email: April.Pitts@tamuc.edu

Required Texts

William H. Putman, *Legal Research, Analysis, and Writing*, 3rd ed. (ISBN-13: 978-1-133-59190-0)
Bluebook: Uniform System of Citation, Harvard, 19th ed.

Course Description

This course is designed to aid the beginning student in acquiring and enhancing legal research skills. Topics covered include the techniques of legal research and writing, sources of the law and how each can be found; case analysis, legal citation, and legal bibliography; and ethical obligations of the paralegal in legal research.

Course Objectives

The goal of this course is to enable the student to:

- Understand and apply legal analysis to specific situations;
- Research case law and statutory law;
- Utilize Westlaw and LEXIS as a research tool;
- Understand and apply general legal citation rules;
- Draft an office legal memorandum; trial and appellate court briefs; and various types of correspondence.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is required and roll will be taken at every class. If you miss more than 2 classes I reserve the right to drop you from the course. If a student leaves before the end of class, it will be considered 1 absence.

Grading Policy

This class will be taught using the Socratic Method as well as lecture. You may be called on at any time and are expected to be fully prepared to discuss the assigned reading material. This is a cumulative grade over the course of the semester. You must attend or lose points for that day.

You are also responsible for completing weekly assignments. Your assignments will be reviewed, graded and returned to you. This is a cumulative grade over the course of the semester. Each weekly assignment will consist of several chapter specific assignments. Weekly assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date it is due.

All assignments must have a cover page indicating the following: your name, class, name of the assignment, and date the assignment is due. A deduction of 10 points will be assessed to all assignments turned in without a cover page.

All written work will be graded not only on content, but also on writing style, **including punctuation and grammar**. Homework, case briefs, memos, take-home exams and any other written assignment *will NOT* be accepted late or by email. If an assignment is turned in late, a grade of zero will be given.

You will be required to submit a take-home memorandum during finals week. Any collaboration with other students with regards to the research or substance of the memo will result in a failing grade on the memo.

Your grade will be calculated according to the following formula:

Attendance/Participation	10 points
Weekly Assignments	30 points
Midterm Exam	20 points
Final Memorandum	30 points
Citation Exam	<u>10 points</u>
Total	100 points

Grade Distribution is as follows:

A = 90-99

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 65-69

F = 64 and below

(No extra credit work will be allowed)

Classroom Etiquette

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct) You are expected to exhibit respect for the instructor and fellow students at all times. All electronic devices (except laptops) must be turned off during class. Laptop use is limited to reading notes made for class and taking notes during class. In the event you choose to use a laptop, sound features must be disabled. Surfing the internet and playing games on your laptop during class time are strictly prohibited. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in removal from class.

Disability Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University – Commerce
Gee Library
Room 132
Phone: (903)886-5150 or (903)886-5835
Fax: (903)468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

“What is Plagiarism

Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work, or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense:

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means

1. to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
2. to use (another's production) without crediting the source
3. to commit literary theft
4. to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

But can words and ideas really be stolen?

According to U.S. law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

All of the following are considered plagiarism:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules)

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism. If you have retained the essential idea of an original source, and have not cited it, then no matter how drastically you may have altered its context or presentation, you have still plagiarized.” (www.plagiarism.org)

If you plagiarize, you will receive an F for the assignment in question and the matter will be referred to the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

As Instructor, I reserve the right to amend, modify, or alter this syllabus as the situation may require.

Tentative Course Reading Assignments

Week 1

08/31/2015 First Day of Class: Course Overview

Week 2

09/07/2015 **No Class – Labor Day**

Week 3 Weekly Assignment (Ch. 1: Exercise 4)
(Ch. 2: Exercises 3, & 5)

09/14/2015 Chapter 1: Introduction to Legal Principles and Authorities

Chapter 2: Introduction to Legal Research and Analysis

Week 4

09/21/2015 Chapter 3: Constitutions, Statutes, Administrative Law, and Court Rules –
Research and Analysis

Week 5 Weekly Assignment: (Ch. 3: Exercise Assignments 1, 6, & 8)

09/28/2015 Chapter 4: Case Law – Research and Briefing (121-136)

Week 6 Weekly Assignment: (Ch. 4: Exercise Assignments 4, 5, 6, & 9)

10/05/2015 Chapter 5: Secondary Authority and Other Research Sources –
Encyclopedias, Treatises, Annotated Law Reports, Digests, Shepard’s (164-
188)

Chapter 6: Secondary Authority – Periodicals, Restatements, Uniform Laws,
Dictionaries, Legislative History, and Other Secondary Authorities

Week 7 Weekly Assignment: (Ch. 5: Exercise Assignments 5, 7, & 11)

10/12/2015 Chapter 7: Computers and Legal Research

Week 8

10/19/2015 **Midterm Exam**

Week 9	Weekly Assignment: (Ch. 7: 1, 3, 4, 10, 12, & 13) (Ch. 8: Exercise Assignments: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, & 14)
10/26/2015	Chapter 8: Legal Citation
Week 10	Weekly Assignment: (Ch. 9: Exercise Assignment 5) (Ch. 10: Exercise Assignment 3)
11/02/2015	Chapter 9: Legal Analysis – Key Facts Chapter 10: Legal Analysis – Issue Identification
Week 11	Weekly Assignment: (Ch. 11: Exercise Assignments 2 & 3) (Ch. 12: Exercise Assignment 6) (Ch. 13: Exercise Assignments 4 & 7)
11/09/2015	Chapter 11: Legal Analysis – Stating the Issue Chapter 12: Case Law Analysis – Is a Case on Point? Chapter 13: Counteranalysis
Week 12	Weekly Assignment: First Draft of Final Memo Facts and Issue
11/16/2015	Chapter 15: The Writing Process for Effective Legal Writing Chapter 16: Office Legal Memorandum: Issues and Facts
Week 13	
11/23/2015	Chapter 17: Office Legal Memorandum: Analysis to Conclusion
Week 14	
11/30/2015	Individual Memo Appointments
Week 15	
12/07/2015	Citation Exam
Week 16	
12/14/2015	Final Memo Due by 5:00 pm
