

Introduction to Legal Research

PLS 221 - 3 credits

Doane University – Winter I Term

October 18, 2017 to December 13, 2017

Description:

A course providing a general understanding of the nature of legal research and its specific techniques and methodologies. Students learn how to use the resources available in a standard law library and in computer-assisted legal research programs to locate primary source materials and secondary source materials, such as treatises, law review articles, and legal encyclopedia, all of which help explain the law. **Prerequisite:** Paralegal Studies 121.

Location and Times:

Doane University, Lincoln
Wednesday, 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm

Instructor:

Prof. Jason W. Hayes, J.D.

Cell: (402) 304-9414
E-mail: jason.hayes@doane.edu

Textbook Materials:

Required: Deborah E. Bouchoux, *Legal Research Explained*,
Wolters Kluwer (2017). ISBN: 978-1-4548-8233-6

Coleen M. Barger, *ALWD Guide to Legal Citation*,
Wolters Kluwer (6th Ed. 2017). ISBN: 978-1-4548-8776-8

Course Objectives:

The student, after completing the course instruction should have a heightened awareness of the following subject materials:

- 1) gain a general understanding of the nature of legal research and its specific techniques and methodologies for use as a paralegal;
- 2) learn how to use the resources available in law libraries and in computer-assisted legal research programs;
- 3) learn how to use proper legal citations for primary and secondary sources; and,
- 4) become familiar with primary source materials and secondary source materials, such as treatises, law review articles, and legal encyclopedia.

Assessment of Student Performance and Grading:

Students will be able to obtain a total of 300 points from assignments, discussions and examinations conducted during the course. The student will be able to earn the following points:

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| Writing and Research Assignments | 250 |
| Class Participation | 50 |

Summary of Examinations and Assignments:

Writing and research assignments will be assigned throughout the duration of the course that will test and refine the student's legal research skills. These assignments will vary from research practice assignments, to the student preparing a legal research memorandum.

Course Policies:

Attendance: Student attendance at all class meetings is expected. If a student will be unable to attend a class meeting, it is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor and perform any necessary makeup or additional assignments given to the student by the instructor. Students should obtain class notes from fellow classmates, and the absent student is responsible for all material covered on the day of the absence. Two or more unexcused absences may result in a failing grade.

Grading Scale: The grading scale is based on a nine point, A, B, C, D, F scale, as follows:

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| A+ | 100 – 96 | C | 74 – 70 |
| A | 95 – 90 | D+ | 69 – 65 |
| B+ | 89 – 85 | D | 64 – 60 |
| B | 84 – 80 | F | 59 – below |
| C+ | 79 – 75 | | |

Late Assignments: Assignments that are turned in late during the duration of the course are downgraded by one letter grade. For each additional week the assignment is late, an additional letter grade is reduced off the original score given. All assignments must be completed and handed in by December 13, 2017 to receive any credit.

Academic Integrity: The College Academic Integrity Policy will be adhered to in this class. All projects and tests will represent your own work. Any use of others' ideas and words without proper citation of sources is plagiarism and will result in penalties to be determined by the instructor and/or the dean of graduate studies.

Format of Writings: All writing assignments assigned to be completed outside of class should be typed, double spaced, with one-inch margins, and using a font no larger than 12 pt. in Times New Roman, Arial or Courier. If you have any questions regarding this requirement, please contact your instructor. Because this course is within the Paralegal Studies department, the format of writings is critical to the discipline.

Academic Support: The Academic Support Center (ASC) located in room 204 of the Fred Brown Building offers academic support in the areas of time management, study strategies, note taking, test taking, math, reading, and writing. Free tutoring and free one-on-one meetings are available to provide assistance in these areas. Additionally, free proofreading of final drafts of papers is available 24/7. To sign up for the proofreading service or to make a tutor or one-on-one appointment, email the director at: terese.francis@doane.edu.

Course Schedule and Readings:

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| Oct 18 | Chapter 1 Chapter 2 | Finding the Law and Introduction to Legal Research The Federal and State Court Systems |
| Oct 25 | Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Assignment #1 Due | Statutory Law Case Law and Judicial Opinions |
| Nov 1 | Meet at UNL Law Library, East Campus 1875 N 42nd St, Lincoln, NE 68503 | |
| Nov 8 | Chapter 5 Chapter 6 Assignment #2 Due | Locating Cases Through Digests and Annotated Law Reports Secondary Authorities |
| Nov 15 | Chapter 7 Chapter 8 Assignment #3 Due | Special Research Issues The Digital Library: Lexis Advance, Westlaw, and NPRT |
| Nov 22 | No Class | |
| Nov 29 | Chapter 9 Chapter 10 Assignment #4 Due | E-Research: Legal Research Using the Internet Legal Citation Reform |
| Dec 6 | Chapter 11 Chapter 12 | Updating and Validating Your Research Overview of the Research Process |
| Dec 13 | No Class Assignment #5 Due | |