

LEAS 1100
INTRODUCTION TO LEGAL ASSISTANT STUDIES
SPRING 2013
VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Credit Hours: 3

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:00 to 2:30 PM
Wednesdays 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM

By appointment only and office hours are available via online or face-to-face/phone.

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Class: Online via **GoVIEW** from **JANUARY 14, 2013 TO MARCH 6, 2013 (8 WEEKS)**

Texts: Robert E. Mongue, The Empowered Paralegal Carolina Academic Press
ISBN: 978-1-59460-685-4

TEXT IS REQUIRED

Course Description:

An introduction to the field of paralegalism. The course will include the role of the paralegal in the legal system, the regulation and ethics of practice and the skills necessary for successful practice.

Learning Objectives:

1. To prepare students to conduct legal research and apply it in a form and manner that will enable them to support the legal system.
2. To comprehend and make informed decisions regarding the ethical dilemmas of their profession, in order to understand the cultural values they must serve in the performance of their responsibilities.
3. To understand the American legal system in the manner necessary to enable them to function within the system and support its mission of service to society.

Class Preparation:

In order to achieve the learning objectives for this course, students should understand and comprehend the assigned readings, PowerPoint slides provided as a study aid, participation in class discussions and other preparatory assignments. In order to get the most out of class time, students are expected to have read the assigned material and to complete any specific assignments for the assigned week.

Student Protocol:

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and appropriate manner while in this course. Disparaging and/or discriminatory and/or harassing/threatening comments will not be tolerated in the discussion board postings or any communications with fellow

students or the instructor. Valdosta State University's Non-Academic Conduct Code will control such behavior. See <http://www.valdosta.edu/judicial/ConductViolations.shtml>

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications due to a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in Farber Hall. The Access Office website and phone numbers are, www.valdosta.edu/access/ and are 245-2498 (V/VP) and 219-1348 (TTY).

Grading and Evaluation:

Student's grades will be assessed based on the points below.

Weekly Time Sheets	80 points max
Job description	10 points max
Ethical Scenarios	40 points max
Deadline calendar	20 points max
File assignment	25 points max
Interview memo	50 points max
Letter to client	25 points max
Witness List	25 points max
Professionalism Essay	50 points max
Case brief	25 points max
Resume and Cover letter	50 points max
Final Scavenger Hunt	100 points max
Paper Topic, Paper Outline, and Reference List	50 total points max
Rough Draft	50 points max
Term Paper	100 points max
Oral Presentation of Paper	25 points max
Discussion Board postings	100 points max

There are a total of 825 points in this course.

Course grade = your earned points/825 = percentage applied to letter grade table below:

Grading Scale

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	59% and below

Assignments: All assignments are due on **Mondays by 5:00pm EST**. GoVIEW server controls time.

Turnitin

By taking this course, you agree that all required course work may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin, a tool within GoVIEW. For more information

on the use of Turnitin at VSU see Turnitin for Students (<http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/trnitnstu.shtml>).

Instructions on how to submit using this tool for any written assignments will be given on GoVIEW with the appropriate assignments. The instructor reserves the right to use Turnitin on discussion board postings if determined the work is not the student's own.

Discussion Board Postings:

This is an online course, however, an educational program centered on classroom instruction is predicated on the concept of class attendance at scheduled class sessions. Faculty is required to keep attendance records for compliance with various federal regulations. Student absences can have a deleterious effect on the student's grades or the continuing eligibility for financial assistance.

In order to track attendance there will be weekly discussion board postings. Each week students will have instructions on the postings for the course in our class discussion board. The instructions may include a minimum number of postings expected for the week. Students are required to read all of the other student's postings as well. The postings will count for 100 points.

For the discussion board postings, each week's postings will be assessed on a four-point scale:

4 points: The posting(s) integrate multiple viewpoints and weaves both class readings and other participant's postings into their discussion of the subject.

3 points: The posting(s) builds upon the ideas of another participant or two, and digs deeper into the question(s) posed by the instructor.

2 points: A single posting that does not interact with or incorporate the ideas of other participants' comments OR posting(s) that do not elicit further discussion.

1 point: A simple "me too" comment that neither expands the conversation nor demonstrates any degree of reflection by the student.

0 points: No comment or completely inappropriate posting (in other words has nothing to do with the question asked).

A portion of class participation will be a discussion of current events. Each student will be required at least once during the semester to present an article, either newspaper or magazine, dealing with a current event. The article should be linked to the discussion board in the appropriate location and the assigned student will be the "discussion" leader on the event. Each student should read the article and comment appropriately.

Assessments (See Course Assignments for due dates)

There will be no exams...but projects designed to illustrate the course materials. Students will need to keep on top of the schedule and this is designed to be a real world application of the materials and an exercise in time management. This should be a way for the students to experience the types of tasks that may be required of a legal assistant/paralegal.

This may seem lot a great deal of work, but should take the same amount of time as studying for and taking exams.

Weekly Time Sheets

Each week a time sheet will be due detailing the time you spend “working” on this course. Set up a method to track your time reading the course material, studying, researching, etc. If you are given a specific client file to work on, document that time separately and detail what you did. Document your time in 6 minute increments. There will be further information provided. Each week will be work a maximum of 10 points for a total of 80 points.

Job Description

You will be assigned a task to write a job description. More information will follow. Worth a maximum of 10 points.

Ethical Scenarios

Designed to test your knowledge of the ethical rules in fact based scenarios. Worth a maximum of 40 points.

Deadline Calendar

A calendar of all the important due dates this semester with a tickler system for reminders. More information to follow. Worth a maximum of 20 points.

File Assignment

Learning how to put a client file together is important in a legal office. Students will be given client materials to place in an online file and to document all activities associated with said file. More information to follow. Worth a maximum of 25 points.

Interview Memo

Students will be divided into pairs during class as a role playing exercise. Each will play the role of the client and the paralegal. The goal is to get certain information from the client and write an interview memo to the managing attorney regarding the case. More information to follow. Worth a maximum of 50 points.

Letter to Client

Designed to introduce students to formal letter writing in the legal environment. More information to follow. Worth a maximum of 25 points.

Witness List

Designed to introduce students to drafting legal pleadings. More information to follow. Worth a maximum of 25 points.

Professionalism Essay

A 500 word essay on professionalism. More information to follow. Worth a maximum of 50 points.

Case Brief

Designed to introduce students to the briefing of legal cases. More information to follow. Worth a maximum of 25 points.

Resume and Cover Letter

Students will find a job posting they could apply for and draft a resume and cover letter for said posting. More information to follow. Worth a maximum of 50 points.

Final Scavenger Hunt

An Internet scavenger hunt designed to test what the student has learned throughout the semester. Worth a maximum of 100 points.

Term Paper

A term paper is required in this course. First, students will need to write a literature review that will consist of a minimum 25 references. All 25 references will need to be used and properly cited in the paper. The individual references do not have to provide new material. They can be supportive in nature of your overall topic and position. These references can be scholarly articles, statutes, rules of procedures, rules of ethics, cases, newspaper articles, etc. Online sources are acceptable; however, Wikipedia and similar websites are not acceptable source materials. If the student has any doubt, he or she must contact the professor first for approval. Points will be deducted for the lack of proper materials. The paper must be in American Psychological Association (APA) format.

The paper must be at least 10 pages long in text, with 12 point font and one inch margins. The only fonts that will be accepted will be Times New Roman, Ariel and Courier New. The paper should focus on an area of interest either dealing with the law or paralegal studies. The topic can be one of the students choosing, so long as it relates to the material to be covered in this class. The paper is worth 100 points. Submission of the paper will be done via Turnitin. The students will be given access to the grading criteria via a rubric to ensure they are meeting expectations.

Students note...the use of direct quotes. Direct quotes should only be used when the language is so eloquent, so well stated that if the student paraphrased it would take away from the meaning. Therefore, they should only be used sparingly. In your ten page term paper, direct quotes should compromise no more than 30 percent of the words. Thus, for a ten page paper at 250 words per page for a total of 2500 words, that means no more than 750 words can be considered a direct quote.

Paper Topic, Paper Outline, Reference List, and Rough Draft of Paper

(See Course Assignments for due dates.)

By the end of the first week of class students must submit a topic for their term paper. This will be worth 10 points.

By the end of the third week of class an outline of the student's paper is due. The outline should consist of the main topics for the paper, as well as some subheadings. At this point, the paper should support the student's reflection on their topic and beginning stages of research. This will be worth 15 points.

By the end of the fourth week of class, a reference list is due. Students should have at least 15 of the 25 references on that list in APA style. This will be worth 25 points. These

assignments must be submitted to the instructor via our GoVIEW site. Submission in any other form will not be accepted.

A rough draft of the student's paper will be required. The paper must contain at least 7 pages of text and all of the references. The instructor will review the student's rough draft, make comments and suggestions for possible corrections, and return. It is worth 50 points. Once students receive their paper back and make corrections, the paper is submitted for final review. The rough draft will need to be submitted through Turnitin. Grading criteria will be accessible to the student via a rubric to ensure they are meeting expectations.

Presentation of term paper

A presentation of the student's paper is required. The presentation must be in a Power Point and it is worth 25 points. The instructor will post the student schedule of presentations during week 6. Students will post their presentation on the discussion board and will be the leader of the discussion. Fellow classmates are directed to submit any questions via the discussion board for the student to answer during your presentation week.

Late Work

Working in the legal field involves meeting and abiding by deadlines. Therefore, all materials are due as stated on the Course Assignments by **Mondays at 5:00pm EST**, the GoVIEW server controls. Late work will not be accepted after the deadline. If students are having technical difficulties, visit the D2L Help Center: <https://D2LHelp.view.usg.edu>, TOLL FREE 1-855-772-0423. Students should plan ahead and submit assignments early to avoid technical issues at the last minute. If students continue experiencing difficulties submitting work via GoVIEW, contact the professor prior to the assignment due date and time.

Academic Honor Code:

Section I of the Student Code of Conduct, located in the Student Handbook, reads, "To avoid confusion concerning alleged incidents of academic dishonesty, under the normal process, a violation of Appendix A Section I of the Student Code of Conduct is handled academically, i.e. between the student and the professor. The most severe action that may be administered by a professor is a grade of 'F' in that particular course. This is an academic response and not a disciplinary recommendation.

Valdosta State University policy is that a violation of Section I may and should be handled by the professor, the student, and possibly the department head or dean concerned with the offense. However, the most severe sanction that may be administered through this process is to give a grade of "F" in a course.

If a stronger sanction is desired, or if an agreement cannot be reached between the above parties concerning the incident, the matter may be referred to the Dean of Students Office. In such cases where a student may continue to violate Section I after having been warned or sanctioned by one or more professors he or she may then be referred to the Dean of Students Office where official charges may be drawn up and the student subjected to the established VSU disciplinary process.

The following are typical academic dishonesty violations, but they are not to be considered all-inclusive:

1. No student shall receive or give or attempt to receive or give assistance not authorized by the instructor in the preparation of any essay, laboratory report, examination, or other assignment included in any academic course.
2. No student shall take or attempt to take, steal, or otherwise procure in an unauthorized manner any material pertaining to the conduct of a class, including but not limited to tests, examinations, laboratory equipment, and roll books.
3. No student shall sell, give, lend, or otherwise furnish to any unauthorized person material which can be shown to contain questions or answers to any examinations scheduled to be given at any subsequent date in any course of study offered by the University, without authorization from the University.
4. Plagiarism is prohibited. Themes, essays, term papers, tests, and other similar requirements must be the work of the student submitting them. When direct quotations are used, they must be indicated, and when the ideas of another are incorporated in the paper they must be appropriately acknowledged.”

For a full copy of the Academic Honor Code see

<http://www.valdosta.edu/judicial/AcademicStudentConductCode.shtml>.

Further class policy includes: all work in this course must be the student’s own individual effort. Students are not allowed to recycle work from another course and cannot have another student (or person, or website) do any of the student’s assignments, assessments, and interactions (discussions). If students are having problems with an assignment it is best to ask the instructor for help and not another student. These are all violations of the Academic Honor Code and the policies of this course.

First violation, the student will receive a zero for the assignment and a report of Academic Dishonesty filed with the Student Conduct Office (SCO). Upon the second violation, the student will receive an ‘F’ in the course and a second report filed with the SCO. Other sanctions may be issued by the SCO.

Incompletes

A final grade of incomplete will not be given to a student simply to accommodate an inability to complete the required work in a timely manner during the semester. An incomplete will be given only under certain circumstances that are discussed and arranged in advance with the instructor or for circumstances that are beyond the student’s control (e.g., incapacitating medical condition, injury beyond student’s control). See the university policy on incompletes. <http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/RequestforIncomplete.shtml>

Final comments

This course is very labor intensive, particularly since it is in an eight week format. It is important to keep up with the reading assignments and ask questions when the material is unclear. If there are questions please do not hesitate to ask and arrange a time to speak with the instructor. Let the professor know in advance of any difficulties that may influence the student’s performance in this course.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS		
Subject to Change at Instructor's Discretion and with notice either in GoVIEW or by e-mail		
Week/Date	Topic	Assignment
Week One January 14-21, 2013	Course Syllabus Getting Started Managing your time Ethics	Introduction Chapter 1 ABA Model Rules, GA Code websites Introduction Discussion Board Ethics Discussion Board Current Event Week One Time Sheet, and Job Description, and Paper Topic due by 5:00pm EST on January 21, 2013
Week Two January 21-28, 2013	Managing your work Managing your docket	Chapter 2 Chapter 3 Discussion Board Current Event Week Two Time Sheet, and Ethical Scenarios due by 5:00 pm EST on January 28, 2013
Week Three January 28-February 4, 2013	Managing your files	Chapter 4 Discussion Board Current Event Week Three Time Sheet, Deadline Calendar, File Assignment, and Paper Outline due by 5:00pm EST on February 4, 2013
Week Four February 4-11, 2013	Managing your clients Managing your attorney	Chapter 5 Chapter 6 Discussion Board Current Event Week Four Time Sheet, Client Letter, and Reference List due by 5:00pm EST on February 11, 2013
Week Five February 11-18, 2013	The Court System Managing your litigation	US Courts and GA websites Chapter 7

		Discussion Board Current Event Week Five Time Sheet, Interview Memo, and Professionalism Essay due by 5:00 pm EST on February 18, 2013.
Week Six February 18-25, 2013	How to Write a Case Brief Career planning	Discussion Board Current Event Week Six Time Sheet, Witness List, and Rough draft of paper due by 5:00pm EST on February 25, 2013
Week Seven February 25-March 4, 2013	Presentation of Papers	Discussion Board Current Event Week Seven Time Sheet, Case Brief, and Resume and Cover letter due by 5:00 pm EST on March 4, 2013.
Week Eight March 4-6, 2013 NOTE: Not a full week!	Presentations of papers	Discussion Board Current Event Week Eight Time Sheets and Final drafts of paper due by 5:00 pm EST on March 6, 2013
Final Scavenger Hunt due by 5:00pm EST on March 7, 2013		