

Tompkins Cortland Community College
Master Course Syllabus

Course Discipline and Number: PARA 101

Year: 2025-2026

Course Title: Introduction to Paralegalism

Credit Hours: 3

I. Course Description: This course is an examination of the role of paralegals in the legal system, with a particular emphasis on the New York State court system. Topics studied include an overview of the court system and administrative agencies, legal terminology, law office management, and ethical and professional practice standards. Prerequisites: RDNG 116 if required by placement testing; prior completion or concurrent enrollment in ENGL 100. 3 Cr. (3 Lec.) Fall, spring, and summer semesters.

II. Additional Course Information:

1. This course will be offered online only; students must have access to a reliable computer and internet.
2. This course is the first course in the sequence and is required for the Paralegal A.A.S. and the post-bachelor's Paralegal Studies Certificate.
3. This course is a prerequisite for all 200-level paralegal courses.
4. This course may be of interest to anyone with an interest in law including pre-law students, and criminal justice students.

III. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Recognize legal problems.
2. Critically analyze legal information.
3. Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information in legal problem situations.
4. Apply legal concepts and rules to unfamiliar as well as familiar situations.
5. Communicate legal concepts and procedures in written form.

IV. Tompkins Cortland General Education & SUNY Competency Goals

Critical thinking (Tompkins Cortland GE Goal; SUNY Competency)

Students will read and interpret complex legal writing (legal authority) including federal and state judicial decisions, federal and state statutes, and federal and state administrative law (rules and regulations). Students will be required to apply that reading in assignment questions, and in discussions and on exams. Students will learn various procedural and substantive aspects of the federal and NY legal systems.

Social/Global Awareness

A primary premise of our legal system is fairness and due process to all, which include laws that are intended to protect and provide opportunity to a variety of American populations and cohorts. Students are introduced to this legal system which includes civil rights laws, voting rights law, hate crime laws, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and many other statutory provisions designed to increase equity in our society. Students will learn about the various ways the legal system impacts almost every facet of society. In particular, students recognize the impact of their actions on society and the social consequences of certain behaviors in their study of topics such as civil law, criminal law, torts, contracts, commercial law, property law, family law, and administrative law.

Information Management

This class is offered exclusively online, requiring that students master basic personal computer skills to navigate the course hosting program. They will create documents in both word processing formats and "pdf" format. Students will access online legal and non-legal resources relating to the legal system.

This course does not address either of these Tompkins Cortland or SUNY General Education Goals.

V. Essential Topics/Themes

1. Ethics for Lawyers and Paralegals
2. Sources of Law: Cases and Statutes
3. Courts: State and Federal; Trial and Appellate
4. Civil & Federal Procedure
5. Criminal Law
6. Torts
7. Contracts and Commercial Law
8. Real and Personal Property
9. Family Law
10. Administrative Law
11. Paralegal Role in the Law Office

VI. Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

Method	% Course Grade
1. Weekly assignments including drafting; recommended best 10 of 13	50-95%
2. Exams; recommended best 3 of 4	0-50%
3. Discussion Participation/ Attendance	5-10%
4. Optional Project(s): Individual or group projects as designed by the instructor	0-20%

VII. Texts –Required

1. Pyle & Bast, <i>Foundations of Law</i> , 6 th Ed., Cengage Learning, 2016; 9781305856387.
2. Pyle & Bast, <i>Foundations of Law: Cases, Commentary and Ethics</i> , 6 th Ed., Cengage Learning, 2016; 130550500X.

Editions listed are current as of date of syllabus. More recent editions may be used.

VIII. Bibliography of Supplemental Materials

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| 1. Beth Walston-Dunham & John DeLeo, <i>Introduction to Law</i> , 7 th Ed., Cengage Learning, 2019. |
| 2. Ekern & Hames, <i>Introduction to Law</i> , 6th Edition, Pearson, 2018. |
| 3. Frank Shubert, <i>Introduction to Law and the Legal System</i> , 11 th Ed., Cengage Learning, 2014. |

Editions listed are current as of date of syllabus. More recent editions may be used.

IX. Other Learning Resources

Audiovisual: None specified
Electronic: Students will need access to reliable computer with internet access
Other: None.

Attendance Policy: *To maintain good grades, regular attendance in class is necessary. Absence from class is considered a serious matter and absence never excuses a student from class work. It is the responsibility of all instructors to distribute reasonable attendance policies in writing during the first week of class. Students are required to comply with the attendance policy set by each of their instructors. Students are not penalized if they are unable to attend classes or participate in exams on particular days because of religious beliefs, in accordance with Chapter 161, Section 224-a of the Education Law of the State of New York. Students who plan to be absent from classroom activity for religious reasons should discuss the absence in advance with their instructors. See college catalog for more information.*

Services for Students with Disabilities: *It is the College's policy to provide, on an individual basis, appropriate academic adjustments for students with disabilities, which may affect their ability to fully participate in program or course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Coordinator of Access and Equity Services, to discuss their particular need for accommodations. All course materials are available in alternate formats upon request.*

Academic Integrity: *Every student at Tompkins Cortland Community College is expected to act in an academically honest fashion in all aspects of his or her academic work: in writing papers and reports, in taking examinations, in performing laboratory experiments and reporting the results, in clinical and cooperative learning experiences, and in attending to paperwork such as registration forms.*

Any written work submitted by a student must be his or her own. If the student uses the words or ideas of someone else, he or she must cite the source by such means as a footnote. Our guiding principle is that any honest evaluation of a student's performance must be based on that student's work. Any action taken by a student that would result in misrepresentation of someone else's work or actions as the student's own — such as cheating on a test, submitting for credit a paper written by another person, or forging an advisor's signature — is intellectually dishonest and deserving of censure.

Several degree programs offer student learning opportunities (such as internships, field work, and clinical experiences) outside the standard classroom setting. As part of the learning process, students must understand and engage in conduct that adheres to principles guiding employment within the professional workplace. These behaviors include, but are not limited to, academic integrity, accountability, reliability, respect, use of appropriate language and dress, civility, professional ethics, honesty, and trustworthiness. Disciplinary action may be initiated for inappropriate conduct occurring while participating in any course-related project or event.