

Tompkins Cortland Community College
Master Course Syllabus

Course Discipline and Number: PARA 130

Year: 2023-2024

Course Title: Legal Research and Drafting

Credit Hours: 3

I. Course Description: Students develop an understanding of legal research and legal writing. Topics include statutes, case law, drafting and writing process, types of documents, and types and use of research tools, including online legal research with Westlaw and Lexis. In particular, the student gains familiarity with a law library (can be online only) and researching a topic from general topic to specific case. Although this course is intended to be a general course, the primary focus is on New York and federal law. However, after successful completion of the course, students have the tools necessary for legal research of all types, in any jurisdiction. While access to a physical law library is desirable, it is not required. Prerequisites: Prior completion of, or concurrent enrollment in, ENGL 101; C or better grade in PARA 101. Concurrent enrollment in PARA 101 is permissible with instructor permission. 3 Cr. (3 Lec.) Fall and spring 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 second course in the core paralegal sequence and is required for the Paralegal A.A.S. and Paralegal Studies Certificate. Students in the A.A.S. may take it concurrently with PARA 101 with instructor permission.
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 librarians, pre-law students, and criminal justice students.
5. This course may be taken without PARA 101 for non-paralegal students with instructor permission.
6. Students will have free access to Westlaw & Lexis online legal research tools. Use of these resources is required.

III. Student Learning Outcomes

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

1. Research a legal issue from start to finish using primary legal sources, to wit: federal and state cases, statutes, administrative law, and constitutions.
2. Update any research for most current law.
3. Retrieve and apply relevant federal and state cases, statutes, administrative law, and constitutions.
4. Draft and properly format law office letters and legal documents, communicating legal concepts and procedures in a professional written form.
5. Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information in legal problem situations, apply legal concepts and rules to unfamiliar as well as familiar situations.

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 answering assignment questions, drafting, and applying that content. Students will be presented with real-life legal situations for which they will conduct research to find applicable legal authority.

☒ **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 will be learn to access and apply the legal authority which includes civil rights laws, voting rights laws, hate crime laws and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) among many other statutory provisions designed to increase equity in our society.

☒ **Information Management**

Students will be required to retrieve and apply information using Westlaw and Lexis, the proprietary, ubiquitous, online authoritative legal research tools. The 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. While students will primarily rely on Westlaw and Lexis, students will access other non-legal resources relating to various topics.

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

V. Essential Topics/Themes

1. Introduction to Legal Research
2. Federal & State Courts
3. Federal & State Statutes
4. Case Law
5. Digests
6. Encyclopedias
7. Shepardizing and Citing References
8. Other Secondary Sources
9. Research Issues
10. Westlaw and Lexis
11. Internet and Web Research
12. Memos and Legal Writing

VI. Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

Method	% Course Grade
1. Weekly assignments (typically best 11 of 14 44 of 45)	40-60%
2. Three Memos (Recommended 10%, 10%, 25%, @ 900-1,500, 1,100-2,000, 2,000-3,000 word respectively)	30-50%
3. Discussion Participation/ Attendance	5-10%
4. Optional Project(s): Individual or group projects as designed by the instructor	0-10%

VII. Texts

None (all required materials are included in the course)
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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. Deborah E. Bouchoux, <i>Legal Research and Writing for Paralegals</i> , 9 th Ed., Wolters Kluwer, 2019. |
| 2. William Vanz, <i>Gibson's New York Legal Research Guide</i> , 4 th Ed., William S. Hein & Co., Inc., 2014. |
| 3. Yvonne Ekern, <i>Legal Research, Analysis, & Writing</i> , 6 th Ed., Pearson, 2017. |

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: Students will need to apply for access to Westlaw and Lexis as directed by course materials

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.