

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### POLITICAL SCIENCE 222: INTRODUCTION TO LAW (3 semester hours)

**Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:30 – 4:45 PM**  
**SS – 134**

**Instructor:** Professor April Pitts  
**Office Location:** SS – 163  
**Office Hours:** M 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM  
T 6:30 PM – 7:00 PM (except intern meeting days)  
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](mailto:April.Pitts@tamuc.edu)

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#### Required Texts

Thomas F. Goldman and Henry R. Cheeseman, *The Paralegal Professional: The Essentials*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Pearson Prentice Hall  
ISBN: 978-0-13-506401-6

#### Course Description

This course provides an overview of the law and the legal system. Topics include basic legal concepts and terminology in various areas of the law; structure, jurisdictions, functions, practices, and political impact of the judicial system at the local, state, and national levels; current issues in law; and ethical obligations of the paralegal.

#### Course Objectives

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

- Understand the role of the paralegal as a legal professional;
- Understand how law and ethics are interrelated;
- Explain the inner workings of a law office;
- Explain the functions of computer system in the law office, the features in a paperless office and electronic courtroom, and the importance of maintaining security;
- Identify the structure of federal and state court systems;
- Identify and distinguish between different types of jurisdiction;
- Identify functions and interrelationship of judicial, executive and legislative branches of government;
- Identify and explain the steps in the administrative law process;
- Identify and apply the rules of civil and criminal procedure;

- Locate and analyze statutory and case law; and
- Identify and solve hypothetical problems in the context of various types of law.

### Attendance Policy

Attendance is required and roll will be taken at every class. If you miss more than 4 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 are also responsible for completing the assignments listed in this syllabus. The assignments may be found within the chapters of the textbook and in handouts I will provide to you. Your assignments will be reviewed, graded and returned to you. This is a cumulative grade over the course of the semester. There are 6 total assignments.

Case briefs, take-home exams, homework assignments, and any other written work are due at the beginning of the class period indicated in this syllabus. All written work will be graded not only on content, but also on writing style, **including punctuation and grammar**. Homework, case briefs, and take-home exams *will NOT* be accepted late or by email.

The examinations will primarily consist of multiple choice, true/false, definition, and short answer questions. If an exam is take-home, any collaboration with other students with regards to the substance of the exam will result in a failing grade.

Your grade will be calculated according to the following formula:

Attendance/Participation	16 points
Assignments	24 points
Test 1	20 points
Test 2	20 points
Test 3	<u>20 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@tamu-commerce.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.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](http://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

08/28 First Day of Class: Course Overview  
08/30 Chapter 1: The Paralegal Profession

Week 2

09/04 Chapter 2: Ethics and Professional Responsibility  
09/06 Chapter 3: The Paralegal Workplace

Week 3

09/11 Chapter 3: Continued  
09/13 Chapter 4: Technology and the Paralegal

Week 4

09/18 Chapter 5: American Legal Heritage and Constitutional Law  
09/20 Chapter 5: Continued

Week 5

09/25 Chapter 5: Continued  
09/27 **Test 1**

Week 6

10/02 Chapter 6: The Court System and Alternative Dispute Resolution  
10/04 Chapter 6: Continued

Week 7

10/09 Chapter 7: Civil Litigation  
10/11 NO CLASS

Week 8

10/16 Chapter 7: Continued  
10/18 Chapter 7: Continued

Week 9

10/23 Chapter 8: Criminal Procedure and Administrative Law

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10/25 Chapter 8: Continued

Week 10

10/30 Chapter 8: Continued  
11/01 **Test 2**

Week 12

11/06 Chapter 11: Legal Writing and Critical Legal Thinking  
11/08 Chapter 11: Continued

Week 13 (*materials for this week will be provided by the professor*)

11/13 Torts and Personal Injury Law  
11/15 Torts and Personal Injury Law

Week 14

11/20 Torts and Personal Injury Law  
11/22 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

Week 15 (*materials for this week will be provided by the professor*)

11/27 Family Law  
11/29 Family Law Continued

Week 15

12/04 Family Law  
12/06 Last Day of Classes

Week 16

12/13 **Test 3 (1:15 – 3:15 pm)**