POLITICAL SCIENCE 223: LEGAL RESEARCH  
(3 semester hours)  

SOCIAL SCIENCES BUILDING - ROOM  
TUESDAYS, 7:20 P.M. TO 10:00 P.M.  

Instructor:  KARLA HACKETT  
Office Hours: by appointment  
Phone: (903)227-4255  
Email: baughk@co.grayson.tx.us  

Required Texts  

LEGAL RESEARCH & WRITING FOR PARALEGALS, 6TH EDITION  
by Deborah E. Bouchoux  

Bluebook: Uniform System of Citation, Harvard, 19th ed. (Optional)  

Texas Rules of Form, Texas Law Review, 12th ed. (Optional)  

Course Description  

This course is designed to aid the beginning student in acquiring and enhancing legal research skills. Topics covered include the techniques of legal research and writing, sources of the law and how each can be found; case analysis, legal citation, and legal bibliography; and ethical obligations of the paralegal in legal research.  

Course Objectives  

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

- Identify the structure of federal and state court systems;  
- Identify and distinguish between different types of jurisdiction and legal authority;  
- Understand and apply the elements of legal analysis to specific situations;  
- Locate and analyze statutory and case law;  
- Understand and apply statues and case law to specific situations;  
- Brief a case;  
- Understand the role of primary and secondary authority;  
- Utilize Westlaw or LEXIS as a research tool;  
- Understand and apply general legal citation rules;  
- Understand sentences, paragraphs, word selection and usage, grammar, and
punctuation in legal writing;
_ Draft an office legal memorandum and appellate court briefs.

**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 must attend or lose points for that day.

You are also responsible for completing weekly assignments. Your assignments will be reviewed, graded and returned to you. This is a cumulative grade over the course of the semester. Each weekly assignment will consist of several chapter specific assignments. Weekly assignments are due at the beginning of class every Thursday.

All written work will be graded not only on content, but also on writing style, including punctuation and grammar. Homework, case briefs, memos, take-home exams and any other written assignment will NOT be accepted late or by email. If an assignment is turned in late, a grade of zero will be given.

You will be required to submit a take-home memorandum during finals week. Any collaboration with other students with regards to the research or substance of the memo will result in a failing grade on the memo.

Your grade will be calculated according to the following formula:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation &amp; Weekly Assignments</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Memorandum</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Brief</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

“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)

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.
TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

(Instructor reserves the right to change the schedule as needed.)
HANDOUT QUESTIONS WILL BE GIVEN FOR EACH WEEK FROM THE READING ASSIGNMENTS.

1. JANUARY 15 — INTRODUCTION

2. JANUARY 22 — FINDING THE LAW / COURT SYSTEMS: including a study of the sources of law in America and the structure of the American Court system.
   (CH. 1, 2)

3. JANUARY 29 — STATUTORY LAW / CASE LAW: including the publication and location techniques regarding statutory codification as well as the publication and organization of published judicial law and how to interpret those opinions.
   (CH. 3 & 4)

4. FEBRUARY 5 — SECONDARY AUTHORITIES: including the digest and key number systems, annotated law reports, Words & Phrases, encyclopedias, periodicals, treatises and restatements.
   (CH. 5, 6)
5. FEBRUARY 12 — FINDING THE LAW/TOUR OF LIBRARY: including hands-on assignments in a supervised environment. **SCAVENGER HUNT CLASS EXERCISE**

6. FEBRUARY 19 — CITATION FORM: including a look at the rules relating to the form of citations to legal authority. *(CH. 8)*

7. FEBRUARY 26 — SHEPARDS: including an in-depth look at updating and validating the law as well as supplementing research. *(CH. 9)*

8. MARCH 5 — MID-TERM EXAM

9. MARCH 12 — SPRING BREAK

10. MARCH 19 — RESEARCH PROCESS AND LEGAL WRITING: including an overview of the research process — where to start and when to stop and a look at the basics of good writing and the special problems inherent in legal writing. *(CH. 13, 14, 15)*
11. MARCH 26 — FORMS: including a look at the format for legal correspondence, legal memorandum and legal briefs

BASIC ELECTRONIC RESEARCH & QUERY FORMATION: including basic Boolean structure and a discussion of the functions, differences and value of WESTLAW AND LEXIS/NEXIS.

(CH. 11, 12, 16, 17, 18)

TOPICS TO BE GIVEN FOR RESEARCH PAPER

12. APRIL 2 — CLASS DISCUSSION REGARDING RESEARCH PROCESS, LEGAL WRITING, ELECTRONIC RESEARCH AND FORMAT

RESEARCH PAPER DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS

TOPICS TO BE GIVEN FOR LEGAL MEMORANDUM

13. APRIL 9 — CLASS DISCUSSION REGARDING RESEARCH PROCESS, LEGAL WRITING, ELECTRONIC RESEARCH AND FORMAT

LEGAL MEMORANDUM DUE AT
BEGINNING OF CLASS

TOPICS TO BE GIVEN FOR RESPONSE BRIEF

14. APRIL 16 — CLASS DISCUSSION REGARDING RESEARCH PROCESS, LEGAL WRITING, ELECTRONIC RESEARCH AND FORMAT

FINAL EXAM

EXTRA CREDIT DUE

15. APRIL 23 — OPEN

16. APRIL 30 — FINAL EXAM (COMPREHENSIVE)

17. MAY 7 — RESPONSE BRIEF DUE NO LATER THAN 7:30 P.M.