

COURSE SYLLABUS

POLITICAL SCIENCE 426: PARALEGAL INTERNSHIP (3 semester hours)

Mondays, 6:00 – 7:00 PM
Political Science Main Office (Conference Room)

Instructor: Professor April Pitts
Office Location: SS – 163
Office Hours: M 6:30 – 7:00 PM (except intern meeting days)
T 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM
W 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM
R 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM
Phone: (903)886-5310
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Required Texts

Deborah E. Bouchoux and Susan M. Sullivan, *Internships Through Employment*
ISBN: 9780735562479

Course Description

Basic internship for paralegals who lack experience in the legal field. Course integrates practical experience with the student's academic program through supervised work in an appropriate legal environment. Prerequisite: Completion of at least 18 hours of paralegal specialty or consent of the program coordinator. Requires a minimum of 160 working hours.

Course Objectives

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

- Understand the role of the paralegal as a legal professional;
- Use practical skills obtained in coursework;
- Identify ethical dilemmas, if any, and apply the rules of professional conduct while working as a paralegal;
- Identify areas of interest within the legal field;
- Gain real world experience in the legal field with feedback regarding the student's work product and job performance;
- Understand strengths and identify weaknesses;
- Build and improve upon weaknesses identified while working as a paralegal.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is required and roll will be taken at every class. If you miss any class and/or supervisor meetings, 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

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.

Your grade will be evaluated by consideration of the following: attendance at all class/supervisor meetings; evaluation of your work by the internship sponsor; compilation of weekly timesheets and weekly journals; mock interview; resume and cover letter; final paper; and final oral presentation.

Evaluation of Student Work: Your internship sponsor will complete a written evaluation of your job performance as a paralegal at the end of the semester. Areas of evaluation will include appearance, punctuality, attitude, work product, and overall performance. I will also contact your sponsor periodically throughout the semester. I reserve the right to drop you one grade level based on inadequate performance as determined by your internship sponsor in the aforementioned areas of evaluation.

You will complete a final evaluation of the internship. This must be submitted upon completion of the internship.

Time Sheets: You must record your completed work hours on a time sheet. The time sheet must be signed by the intern's supervisor and submitted to the Program Director at the completion of the internship.

Weekly Journal: Over the course of the internship, you will keep a weekly journal recording of their job activities in the office where they are working and their reflections on those activities. You must keep track of the legal issues or matters you were asked to research or handle on a daily basis, the personnel with whom you have interactions, and other legal work the office performs. Journal entries should be neatly typed and dated. A full journal must be submitted at the completion of the internship.

Final Paper: You are required to write a 5 page paper detailing your experiences working as a paralegal intern. Your paper will be typewritten in 12 point font. You must attach a cover page. Please see the attached list of questions designed to help you think about the experiences you have had over the course of the internship. You are not expected to answer all the questions, but you should be able to answer at least 14 questions throughout the course of your narrative. You must answer all questions denoted with an asterisk (*).

Final Paper Presentation: You will be required to orally summarize your paper at the last class meeting as indicated on the syllabus. It must be 10-15 minutes in length. Appearance will be evaluated as well. Please dress appropriately.

Resume and Cover Letter: You will participate in a resume and cover letter workshop.

Mock Interview: You will participate in a mock interview. You will be evaluated on appearance, speech, ability to answer questions clearly, resume, etc. You will be given immediate feedback.

The following are the **required** documentation that must be completed and turned in to the Program Director by the intern:

Resume
Internship Training Agreement
Internship Information Sheet
Internship Time Sheet
Internship Journal
Student Intern Final Evaluation
Intern Sponsor Final Evaluation

Your grade will be calculated according to the following formula:

Weekly timesheets & weekly journals	25 points
Participation in mock interview	25 points
Resume and Cover Letter	10 points
Final paper	15 points
Final oral presentation	<u>25 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.

Code of Student Conduct: *Faculty have the authority to request students who exhibit inappropriate behavior to leave the class and may refer serious offenses to the University Police Department and/or the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.* Failure to comply with the Code of Student Conduct and commonsensical directions listed above may result in a verbal request to cease inappropriate behavior, your immediate removal from the class, being immediately dropped from the class, and/or a review by an appropriate university disciplinary agency. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

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@tamuc.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.

Final Paper: Questions to Think About

You must answer the questions that are denoted with an asterisk (*)

1. *Who was your supervising attorney (what is their position in the office)?
2. *How frequently did you have contact with the supervising attorney?
3. *How frequently did you receive feedback regarding your job performance? Did you receive it from the supervising attorney or from other co-workers? Who were the persons that you worked with that provided you with feedback?
4. *Did you receive any training or guidance on the activities of the office? If so, what kind of training or guidance? Be sure to indicate the person (and position) in the office that provided you with the training or guidance. Was it helpful?
5. *What types of administrative activities did you perform on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis? (Please indicate how frequently you carried out these activities, and be sure to give specific examples of projects that you worked on for the organization.)
6. * What types of legal activities did you perform on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis? (Please indicate how frequently you carried out these activities, and be sure to give specific examples of projects that you worked on for the organization.)
7. *How do these activities contribute to your understanding of the legal system?
8. *What sorts of contact, and how much of it, did you have with the courts on a daily basis?
9. What was the most important work that you carried out? What was the least important job you carried out?
10. What sorts of contact did you have with other legal personnel (lawyers, staff, assistants, paralegal assistants, etc.)?
11. What did you learn about the legal system that you did not know before?
12. What are your impressions of the judicial system, as well as your opinion of other legal personnel involved in the judicial system?
13. *What legal skills do you believe you gained? What legal skills do you wish you had learned? Did you feel prepared to handle the kinds of activities you handled for the organization?
14. How quickly did you grasp the nature of the tasks required? How capable were you of following directions from supervisors?
15. *What would you do differently to improve the quality of the internship experience?

16. *What do you feel you have learned from the internship experience and course? What did you expect to learn from the experience?

17. What do you feel Texas A&M University – Commerce should be aware of as it relates to the internship sponsor? (For example, did you think you received fair treatment by the sponsor, or did you feel like there were unethical or illegal activities that you were required to do?)

18. *Based on your performance, what grade would you give yourself, and most importantly, why?

a. The overall grade should be (please circle one): A B C D F