

Course Description

PLA2120C | Legal Research and Analysis | 4.00 credits

Legal Research and Analysis is an introduction to the legal system, the law library system, the ethical responsibilities and skills of a paralegal when conducting research for primary and secondary sources of law in the United States. Students must earn a minimum of a C to pass this course. Pre-requisite: Satisfactory completion of all mandated courses in reading, English and English for Academic Purposes, or ENC1101, and Pre/Co-Requisites: PLA2003 and PLA2931 with a grade of “C” or better; or departmental approval for non-Paralegal Studies majors

Course Competencies:

Competency 1: The student will develop legal research skills by:

1. Preparing and carrying out a legal research plan
2. Analyzing and categorizing key facts as well as relevant missing facts in a situation
3. Using both print and electronic sources of law to locate applicable statutes, administrative regulations, constitutional provisions, court cases, and other primary source materials
4. Using both print and electronic sources of law to locate treatises, law review articles, legal encyclopedias, and other secondary source materials that help explain the law
5. Properly locate and identify binding and persuasive authority

Learning Outcomes:

- Communicate effectively using listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills
- Solve problems using critical and creative thinking and scientific reasoning
- Formulate strategies to locate, evaluate, and apply information
- Use computer and emerging technologies effectively

Competency 2: The student will develop the ability to conduct legal analysis by:

1. Analyzing which sources of law supersede other sources of law
2. Reading, evaluating, and analyzing both print and electronic sources of law and applying them to issues requiring legal analysis
3. Analyzing whether your jurisdiction accepts or permits using unpublished/ DE published opinions in legal documents

Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate knowledge of ethical thinking and its application to issues in society
- Use computer and emerging technologies effectively

Competency 3: The student will understand the online resources available for computer-assisted legal research by:

1. Performing computer-assisted legal and Internet legal and factual research using free and commercial research tools (i.e., LEXIS, Westlaw)
2. Providing and discussing auto-cite and electronic investigation applications/resources
3. Accessing legal and non-legal data available on the Internet; compare keyword and subject-oriented search engines
4. Evaluating Internet sites for reliability and validity of information; locate and join sites that relate to the legal assistant career

Learning Outcomes:

- Communicate effectively using listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills
- Solve problems using critical and creative thinking and scientific reasoning
- Formulate strategies to locate, evaluate, and apply information
- Demonstrate knowledge of ethical thinking and its application to issues in society
- Use computer and emerging technologies effectively

Competency 4: The student will understand and apply ethical rules dictating legal research and writing skills by:

1. Locating and applying the relevant ethical rules when: - conducting research, - drafting documents, - communicating with clients, opposing counsel, and the court; - applying court rules/commercial citation formats when preparing written work (i.e., ALWD, Bluebook Legal Citations)
2. Identifying, locating, and appropriately using both print and electronic resources to update and verify the reliability of cited legal authority
3. Shepardizing the history and treatment of law
4. Properly citing both print and electronic sources of law; “Cite check” legal sources
5. Analyzing whether your jurisdiction accepts or permits using unpublished/ DE published opinions in legal documents.

Learning Outcomes:

- Communicate effectively using listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills
- Formulate strategies to locate, evaluate, and apply information
- Demonstrate knowledge of ethical thinking and its application to issues in society