

**Lawyering Skills I**  
**Professor David E. Sorkin**  
**Spring 2002**

**SYLLABUS**

**Overview**

This course is designed to teach entering law students to research and analyze legal problems; to discern issues, relevant facts, and the contentions of both sides of a legal controversy; and to write the product of their efforts in an objective memorandum format.

You will prepare four office memoranda in this course. The first one, and a rewrite of that memorandum, will be based upon a packet of research provided to you. You will also learn about the basic materials used in legal research, including court decisions, statutes, and commentary sources. For the last two memoranda, you will complete the necessary research on your own in the law library.

A web site for the class is located at [www.lawyeringskills.com](http://www.lawyeringskills.com).

**Instructor**

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**Textbooks**

**Required texts:** There are three required textbooks for the course: Helene S. Shapo et al., *Writing and Analysis in the Law* (4th ed., Foundation Press 1999); Christina L. Kunz et al., *The Process of Legal Research* (5th ed., Aspen L. & Bus. 2000); and Association of Legal Writing Directors & Darby Dickerson, *ALWD Citation Manual* (Aspen L. & Bus. 2000).

**Recommended texts:** Students may also wish to obtain one or more of these supplemental texts: Bryan A. Garner, *Legal Writing in Plain English* (U. Chi. Press, 2001); Richard C. Wydick, *Plain English for Lawyers* (Carolina Academic Press, 4th ed. 1998); *Black's Law Dictionary* or a comparable legal dictionary; a general dictionary, such as *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*; a general guide to grammar and usage, such as *Barron's Pocket Guide to Correct Grammar*; and possibly a legal usage dictionary (either *A Dictionary of Modern Legal Usage* or *Dictionary of American Legal Usage*).

## Course Policies

**Attendance:** Attendance at and preparation for each class meeting is required and expected. You will not receive credit for the course if you are absent from more than 25% of the scheduled class meetings. Students are responsible for all material covered or handed out in class and all announcements made during class, whether or not an absence is excused.

**Grading:** The course grade will be determined based upon four written memorandum assignments, although students also must complete several supplemental exercises in order to pass the course. At the end of the semester I will weigh the memorandum assignments at 10%, 20%, 30%, and 40%, respectively, and will apply the law school's grading curve in order to assign a grade to each student for the course. Under the curve, the median course grade is a B, and about two thirds of the class will fall within the B- to A- range. While I try to give students a general idea of how well they performed on each assignment in both relative and absolute terms, I do not provide specific information about rankings and ranges in order to protect students' privacy and avoid fostering competition.

**Late policy:** The four graded memorandum assignments must be submitted promptly at the beginning of class on the due date. Any request for an extension of time must be supported by valid reasons and should be submitted as early as possible. **Late papers will be penalized by a deduction of one full letter grade for each 24 hours or portion thereof that a paper is late, not counting Sundays.** Late penalties will be waived or reduced only for good cause submitted in writing or via e-mail, with appropriate documentation. Computer and copier problems will not be accepted as an excuse for late papers. Graded papers will normally be handed back two weeks after the due date, and papers therefore will not be accepted after that time. In other words, **if you do not submit a graded assignment within two weeks after the due date, you will not be able to pass the course.**

**Plagiarism:** When you submit an assignment in this course, you are representing that it is your own work. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are viewed as serious offenses at the law school, and will not be tolerated in this class. The Lawyering Skills faculty's official plagiarism policy will be distributed in class.

**Online research:** The research component of this course focuses on conventional methods of legal research, and students therefore may not conduct research using Lexis, Westlaw, or other specialized online databases for the research and writing assignments in this course.

**Conferences:** I normally will be available to assist students on a walk-in basis during my office hours. At certain times during the semester, however, I will ask you to make an appointment for an individual tutorial conference. These conferences are intended to provide you with individual feedback on your writing assignments to supplement my written comments, to give you an opportunity to receive help with specific writing and analytical problems, and to help you learn what you can do to improve your performance on future assignments.

## Semester Schedule

**January 15:** First class meeting. Read chapters 1 and 2 in *Writing and Analysis in the Law*. The first memorandum assignment will be distributed (due February 5).

**January 22:** Read chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 and appendices C and D in *Writing and Analysis in the Law*. Prepare a case brief of the first case in the memorandum assignment packet and an outline of the issues in the assignment to discuss in class.

**January 29:** Read chapters 8 and 10 and appendix A in *Writing and Analysis in the Law*.

**February 5:** First memorandum assignment due.

**February 12:** Read chapters 1 through 9 in *The Process of Legal Research*, and part 1 (pages 1-12) in the *ALWD Citation Manual*.

**February 19:** Read chapter 9 in *Writing and Analysis in the Law*.

**February 26:** The second memorandum assignment will be distributed (due April 2).

**March 5:** Rewrite of first memorandum assignment due. Read chapters 10 and 11 in *The Process of Legal Research*.

**March 12:** No class (spring break).

**March 19:** Read chapter 3 in *Writing and Analysis in the Law*, and chapter 12 in *The Process of Legal Research*.

**March 26:** Read chapter 11 in *Writing and Analysis in the Law*.

**April 2:** Second memorandum assignment due. The third memorandum assignment will be distributed (due April 30).

**April 9:** Read chapter 12 in *Writing and Analysis in the Law*, and chapter 19 in *The Process of Legal Research*.

**April 16:** Discuss second and third memorandum assignments.

**April 23:** Work on third memorandum assignment.

**April 30:** Last class meeting. Third memorandum assignment due.