

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
INTRODUCTION TO LAW - LS 201 (01), 3 credits
Winter Term 2016

Professor: Kristine Mullendore
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Days Class Meets: Tuesday and Thursday
Time Class Meets: 4 to 5:15 PM
Location of Class: 205D DeVos Center
Office Hours:
Monday 5:00 to 6 PM; Tuesday and
Thursday 1:00 to 3:30 and other
times by appointment

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION: Introduction to the legal profession, with emphasis on paralegal roles and responsibilities; legal ethics; and major substantive areas of law in the United States including criminal law and substantive civil law areas of agency, business organizations, contracts, real and personal property, torts, wills, and estate administration. Offered fall and winter semesters.

II. PREREQUISITES and/or CO-REQUISITES: none

NOTE: This course is the foundation course for the Legal Studies major/minor. The Legal Studies program can be used to prepare individuals for work in non-attorney professions as legal assistants/paralegals, who are legal professionals who may not provide legal services directly to the public, except as permitted by law. As a result, this course's content includes assignments, lectures, group discussions and other activities that specifically focus on preparing persons to work as legal assistants/paralegals. However, in addition to preparing its graduates to work as legal assistants the Legal Studies program provides students with skills and knowledge necessary for post graduate study at law schools and other graduate study programs including criminal justice, social justice and other related programs and may also be of interest to students interested in pursuing these areas of study.

III. INTRODUCTORY PROSE: At the conclusion of this course students will understand the fundamental concepts guiding the US legal system as well as have knowledge of basic concepts of the legal principles that govern principle areas of substantive law.

IV. OBJECTIVES: Upon completion of this course, the student will:

1. *Identify and describe* the basic principles of substantive civil law of contracts, real and personal property, torts, wills and estate management, family law, and also criminal law (*knowledge*).
2. *Identify and describe* formal U.S. legal systems (*knowledge*).
3. *Identify and describe* alternatives to the formal U.S. legal system (*comprehension*).
4. *Identify and describe* the roles and responsibilities of legal professionals (*comprehension*).
5. *Demonstrate* the ability to write a brief of a court decision (*application*).
6. *Demonstrate* the ability to contribute appropriately to group activities (*application*).
7. *Identify* the paralegal's professional role and responsibility in the law, including issues of equity, ethics, and cultural competency (*knowledge*).

V. BLOOM'S TAXONOMY LEVEL AND DOMINANT CURRICULUM "THREADS": While the current course will draw from across "Bloom's Taxonomy" of learning, it will nevertheless dominantly draw from the levels of "Knowledge", "Comprehension", and "Application." In addition, dominant curriculum "threads" to be assessed throughout this course will be writing and verbal skills, group work, and the development of technical and professional skills.

VI. TOPICS

Date	Reading and Assignments
Jan 12	Course overview and administrative matters – no reading assignment

Jan 14	Chapter 1 - Introduction to the Study of Law Chapter 2 - Paralegals in Legal Systems and web site http://www.michbar.org/legalassistants/
Jan 18	Martin Luther King Day activities
Jan 19-21	Chapter 3 – Functions and Sources of Law Chapter 4 - Classification of the Law “Courts” Chapter – PDF file posted to Class Bb site.
Jan 26 - 28	Chapter 5 – Structure of the Court System Chapter 13 – Finding and Interpreting Court Opinions; Case Briefing Exercise
Feb 2 -4	Chapter 6 – Civil Litigation and its Alternatives Chapter 17 – Criminal Procedure (pp. 266 – 298) and Legal Reasoning Using IRAC
Feb 9 - 11	Chapter 12 – Finding and Interpreting Enacted Law Case Briefing Assignment #1 Due February 8
Feb 16-18	Chapter 11 – Legal Ethics Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistants, http://www.michbar.org/opinions/ethics/utilization.cfm (read carefully) Michigan Rules of Professional Conduct (skim), http://courts.mi.gov/Courts/MichiganSupremeCourt/CurrentCourtRules/5MichiganRulesOfProfessionalConduct.pdf See also, http://www.michbar.org/opinions/ethicsopinions.cfm
Feb 23	Review for Midterm Exam
Feb 25	Midterm exam
March 1	Review exam results and Group Work , Computer-Assisted Research, pp. 465-477
March 3	Chapter 7 – Tort Law
March 6-13	<i>Spring Break Recess: no classes</i> <i>Friday, March 11 at 5 PM is GVSU's Withdrawal deadline to receive a grade of "W"</i>
March 15 & 17	Chapter 7 – Tort Law cont'd
March 22 - 24	Chapter 8 – Contract Law and UCC
March 29 – 31	Chapter 9 – Property law and Specialized Practice area (business organizations, debt collection, family law, et al.)
April 5	Chapter 10 - Criminal Law (pp. 247-266)
April 7, 12, 14, and 19	Group argument presentations
April 21	<i>Review for final exam and any remaining group presentations</i>
Thursday, April 28	Final Exam: 4 to 5:50 PM

NOTE: This is a tentative outline of the course schedule. Your instructor reserves the right to change the schedule as needed to meet course objectives. Papers and tests become the property of the instructor upon submission and may be retained by the instructor at the instructor's discretion, although your intellectual property rights in your work remain your own. Student work will be destroyed at the end of the term following the class.

VII. CLASS POLICIES:

GRADES: Each test will account for 30% of your final grade. Class participation and completion of individual and group assignments that will be given during class sessions will account for another 10% of your grade. There are two graded case brief assignments, each of which will each account for 5% (10% combined) of your final grade. One will be of a case provided by the instructor and other will be of the case chosen by the group for the group argument presentation. The group presentation in class of the legal arguments raised in the case chosen by the group from its assigned

substantive law area will account for the remaining 20%. Each member is to independently prepare their individual analysis of the selected case in a written brief and then also share that analysis with their group members as they prepare for the class presentation. This is the second case briefing assignment mentioned earlier.

- 1) If a student misses a class session, it is the student's responsibility to obtain course information and assignments done that day from the instructor, the course web site, and fellow students.
- 2) Students are responsible for all material covered in class, including handouts distributed in class. Tests may cover materials discussed in class which are not in the textbook or other written materials.
- 3) Assignments must be turned in on the date due. Grades for late assignments will be reduced by 10% for each 24 hours that the assignment is late as each 24 hour period elapses. All assignments are to be word processed unless the instructor indicates otherwise. Email submission of assignments is not permitted, except for proof that they were completed on time. A hard copy of the assignment must be submitted to the instructor before it will be graded.
- 4) All tests that are not taken and all assignments not turned in will be given a grade of zero when final grades are calculated. In order to receive a "C" in this course, students must demonstrate by their tests, in-class assignments, written assignments, group presentation, and class participation that 75% of the material is understood. The grades will not be curved. It is possible for every student to receive an "A".

GRADE SCALE: 95-100 = A, 92-94 = A-, 89-91 = B+, 85-88 = B, 82-84 = B-, 79-81 = C+, 75-78 = C, 72-74 = C-, 69-71 = D+, 66 - 68 = D, 65 and below = F.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Ten per cent of your grade will consist of class participation and the completion of any assignments that are given during class sessions.

- 1) Cell phones, pagers, and other personal communication devices are to be turned off during class time unless a waiver of this requirement is obtained from the instructor in advance.
- 2) Class participation is an important part of the learning process. Students are expected to come to class prepared to share questions and thoughts relating to the assigned topics. Some topics will be covered in class primarily through the use of group discussion as opposed to lecture by the instructor. All class members are expected to contribute to a classroom environment that is conducive to learning.
- 3) To receive an "A" for class participation you must attend class regularly, according to my records (students are expected to sign the attendance sheet during class and the sheet may be circulated for signature more than once during evening class sessions), complete assignments given in class (including any class assignments that are to be completed outside of the classroom), and be involved in group discussions. Every student will be expected to respond to questions during class. If you have a life event that regularly, for good reason that can be documented, interferes with your class attendance you should initiate a discussion with the instructor to try and resolve the attendance issue. Assigned reading should be completed before each class session. **Class discussions will begin where the text leaves off and textbooks are to be brought to each class.** The text contains problems to help reinforce the material covered in each chapter. Students should read through the problems.
- 4) All members of the class will be treated in a respectful and courteous fashion. Failure to do so will result in a downward adjustment of the class participation grade. Conduct during class involving such things as consistently talking with fellow students while others are speaking, improper use of electronic communication devices and/or other behaviors that are distracting to either fellow students or the instructor during class time will result in a failing grade for class participation, if not corrected after instructor warning. Using computers in class to engage in email communication or Instant Messaging during class discussions and lectures will also negatively impact this grade if discovered. It will also result in a loss of the future ability to use the device in class for note taking in this or any other course taught by this instructor. Each student may be asked complete a self-evaluation form evaluating their own performance on this aspect of their course grade including timely arrival to each class session and attendance during the entire class period, which would then be one factor in the assignment of the final grade for class participation.

CASE BRIEFING ASSIGNMENTS: As noted earlier, every student will be required to do two case briefings. The first case briefing will be of a case provided by the instructor and every student will brief the same case. The second case will be found by each group's independent research within the assigned topic area of the group that is the substance of the group presentation. **This case brief is in addition to the other written work to be submitted for this assignment and should be completed independently by each group member early in the group work process. The second case brief is to be submitted on the date of the group presentation, unless prior approval for an extension is obtained from the instructor. A reminder that a ten percent deduction will be made to brief grades for every 24 hour period assignments are late without an approved extension.** More specific instructions will be provided separately as to the requirements for the two case briefing assignments.

GROUP PRESENTATION: All students will participate in a group presentation of the legal issues raised in a selected appellate court opinion to the class. More specific directions for this presentation assignment will be provided separately.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance will play a factor in your grade for class participation. It is otherwise optional although strongly recommended, since much of the information needed to complete the course objectives will be available only in the class lectures and discussions. Attendance will be recorded at the beginning of each class session through a sign-in sheet. If you miss a test, you should contact the instructor as soon as possible to explain your absence and make arrangements to make up the examination. **Any examination not made up before the next class session may not be taken in the same form.** If GVSU cancels classes on a scheduled test date, the test will be given on the next class date. If you require the instructor to certify your attendance in class, you must be in regular attendance by the instructor's records to receive it.

WITHDRAWAL: If you wish to withdraw from this course with a grade of "W", you must do so by 5 PM on Friday, **March 11**, which is the University's withdrawal deadline. If you stop coming to class, GVSU does not withdraw you from the course and you will be graded according to work completed.

FIRE EMERGENCY RESPONSE: Immediately proceed to the nearest exit during a fire alarm. Do not use elevators.

More information is available on the University's Emergency website located at <http://www.gvsu.edu/emergency>.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES RESOURCES: Patricia Bravender is the criminal justice librarian and she can provide you with individualized research assistance for all of your classes. Her office is in the Steelcase Library on the DeVos Campus downtown and she can be reached at bravendp@gvsu.edu or 331-7338. The criminal justice library subject guide (<http://libguides.gvsu.edu/cj>) contains links to all of the criminal justice databases and other specific resources for criminal justice students, including crime statistics and the legal studies library subject guide provides the same type of information for legal studies related databases (<http://libguides.gvsu.edu/lj>).

You may also find help at the **Knowledge Market** which offers one-stop support for library research, writing, and oral presentations. Three academic support services – University Libraries, the Fred Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors, and the Speech Lab – are available in one convenient location to give you feedback and resources. The consultants in the **Knowledge Market** help students brainstorm and develop topics, learn more efficient strategies for completing assignments, and practice and improve library research, writing, and speech skills. For information about the **Knowledge Market** or to make an appointment, visit www.gvsu.edu/library/km.

VII. METHODS OF EVALUATION:

<u>Assignments/Grading</u>	Midterm	30%
	Final exam	30%
	Groups project/presentation	20%
	Case briefings (2 - worth 5% each)	10%
	<u>Class Participation & Assignments</u>	<u>10%</u>
	Total	100%

VIII. TEXT(S)

Required: Currier, K. A. and Eimermann, T. E. (2013) *Introduction to Paralegal Studies: A Critical Thinking Approach, Fifth Edition*, Frederick, MD, Wolters Kluwer Law and Business.
Book Chapter: *Courts*, PDF file posted to Course Bb site (2014)

Recommended: Oran, D. (2008) *Oran's Dictionary of the Law Fourth Edition*. Albany, NY; Thompson Delmar Learning. (A different legal dictionary or edition may be substituted for this one.)
Also, the Grand Valley libraries Law and Legal Studies Resource page provides links to online dictionaries and other helpful research materials: <http://libguides.gvsu.edu/content.php?hs=a&pid=11942>. Black's Law Dictionary is also accessible through Campus WestLaw as part of the University Libraries Databases.

IX. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Assumed by GVSU and this professor, is that each student possesses an exceptional level of academic integrity. Section 223.00 & 223.01 of the *Student Code* are reproduced below for your reference.

SECTION 223.00 INTEGRITY OF SCHOLARSHIP AND GRADES: Truth and Honesty. The principles of truth and honesty are recognized as fundamental to a community of teachers and scholars. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor these principles, and in so doing protect the validity of University grades. This means that all academic work will be done by the student to whom it is assigned without unauthorized aid of any kind. Instructors, for their part, will exercise care in the planning and supervision of academic work, so that honest effort will be positively encouraged. Compliance shall include compliance with the following specific rules:

- a) No student shall knowingly, without authorization, procure, provide or accept any materials which contain questions or answers to any examination or assignment.
- b) No student shall, without authorization, complete, in part or in total, any examination or assignment for another person.
- c) No student shall, without authorization, allow any examination or assignment to be completed, in part or in total, by another person.
- d) No student shall knowingly plagiarize or copy the work of another person and submit it as his/her own.
- e) No student shall submit work that has been previously graded, or is being submitted concurrently to more than one course, without authorization from the instructor(s) of the class(es) to which the student wishes to submit it.

SECTION 223.01 PLAGIARISM: Any ideas or material taken from another source for either written or oral presentation must be fully acknowledged. Offering the work of someone else as one's own is plagiarism. The language or ideas taken from another may range from isolated formulas, sentences, or paragraphs to entire articles copied from books, periodicals, speeches or the writings of others students. The offering of materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgment also is considered plagiarism. Any student who fails to give credit in written or oral work for the ideas or materials that have been taken from another is guilty of plagiarism.

DISABILITY-RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS: If you have a need for disability-related accommodations, please inform me and the Office of Disability Support Services at 200 STU (331-2490). Reasonable and effective accommodations and services will be provided to students if the requests are made in a timely manner, with appropriate documentation in accordance with federal, state, and university guidelines

CAUTION: This course is intended for educational purposes only. The information is not meant to be legal advice, nor should it be used as such. REMINDER: ***THE LAST DAY STUDENTS MAY WITHDRAW FROM THIS COURSE WITH A GRADE OF "W" IS MARCH 11***

Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain*
(In other words, a level-by-level approach to understanding how you think!)

Benjamin Bloom created this taxonomy (organization of categories) to understand the level of abstract thinking required in various educational settings. *During the course of the semester, course content, exercises, assignments and tests will move through these levels from knowledge to analysis.* In other words, this class is structured to develop and test your critical thinking skills about the material. (Note that the taxonomy works from the bottom up. That is, the higher you go on the chart, the more developed the level of critical thinking.)

What does this mean for you as a student in this course? (1) *It is very important that you gain the foundational knowledge for the course.* Each unit will build on old knowledge and introduce new knowledge. If you don't understand a core concept, see me! Don't get lost or left behind because you were afraid to ask. *There are no stupid questions in this class!* (2) *Participate in the class exercises and assignments.* I develop these to help you use your knowledge and develop your thinking skills through case scenarios, problems, and focused activities. *This isn't just busy work!* Believe it or not, there's a method to the madness! (3) *Review the test study guides to see what level of thinking I will expect on each topic.* If I ask you to identify something, I will be asking you to tell me what you know. If I ask you to define something, I will be asking you to show me what you comprehend (understand). If I ask you to compare and contrast two ideas, I am asking you to analyze the material in terms of similarities and/or differences. If I am asking you to integrate or assess, I am asking you to synthesize and evaluate. *As you will see, test questions often are similar to in-class activities or assignments, another good reason to make sure that you participate and ask if you have questions!*

Bloom's Taxonomy

6. EVALUATION	Students can use previously learned standards/criteria to determine the worth or merit of a complex product.	Compare and discriminate between ideas, Assess value of theories, presentations, Make choices based on reasoned argument, Verify value of evidence, Recognize subjectivity	Assess, decide, rank, grade, test, measure, recommend, convince, select, judge, explain, discriminate, support, conclude, compare, summarize
5. SYNTHESIS	Students can create an original and complex product out of a set of simpler components.	Use old ideas to create new ones, Generalize from given facts, Relate knowledge from several areas, Predict, draw conclusions	Combine, integrate, modify, rearrange, substitute, plan, create, build, solve, perform, establish, predict, produce, modify, plan, formulate, design, invent, compose, formulate, prepare, generalize, rewrite
4. ANALYSIS	Students can take a complex set of material and break it down into its component parts and/or explain why a complex set of relationships is organized as it is or what caused it to be or predict from the present to the future.	Seeing patterns, Organization of parts, Recognition of hidden meanings, Identification of components	Analyze, breakdown, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare and contrast, select, explain, infer, show how, draw a diagram, deduce
3. APPLICATION	Students can apply previously learned material such as concepts, rules or generalizations to newly taught material.	Use information, Use methods, concepts, theories in new situations, Solve problems using required skills or knowledge	Apply, classify, find, choose, compute, sort, generalize, organize, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, show, solve, examine, modify, relate, change, classify, experiment, discover
2. COMPREHENSION	Students can express previously learned material in their own way.	Understanding information, Grasp meaning, Translate knowledge into new context, Interpret facts, Compare, Contrast, Order, Group, Infer causes, Predict consequences	Summarize, define, put in your own words, describe, interpret, contrast, predict, associate, distinguish, estimate, differentiate, discuss, extend, summarize, translate, illustrate, restate, demonstrate
1. KNOWLEDGE	Students can recall, reproduce or recognize previously learned information as it was taught to them.	Observation and recall of information, Knowledge of dates, events, places, Knowledge of major ideas, Mastery of subject matter	List, define, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, examine, tabulate, quote, underline, place in order, reproduce, recognize, recall, name, who, when, where, etc.
LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	GOAL	SUGGESTED ACTION VERBS/QUESTION CUES

Adapted from Bloom, B. S. (1984). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Pearson Education