PELLISSIPPI STATE TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE
MASTER SYLLABUS

LEGAL RESEARCH
LAW 1060

Class Hours: 3.0  
Credit Hours: 3.0
Laboratory Hours: 0.0  
Date Revised: Fall 00

Catalog Course Description:
A study of necessary materials for legal research, codes, reporter systems, digests, and practice manuals. Methods of legal citation are studied.

Entry Level Standards:
College-level competencies in logic, reading, and English are required.

Prerequisites:
LAW 1000, 1005; ENGL 1010

Textbook(s) and Other Reference Materials Basic to the Course:
*A Uniform System of Citation* (current edition)
*Discovering Westlaw*, 7th Ed. (Westlaw, 1999)

I. Week/Unit/Topic Basis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Identify Research Terms</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Westlaw Training: Assessing Media Options</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>Secondary Sources; Synthesizing Results of Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>Primary Authority: Case Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>Statutes and Constitutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>Legislative Process Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>Administrative Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Rules of Procedure and Ethics</td>
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II. Course Objectives*:

A. Demonstrate a complete and thorough understanding of legal ethics. I, III, V

B. Demonstrate an understanding of the evolution and structure of the Anglo-American “common law” and “civil law” systems. I, II, IV

C. Demonstrate a basic understanding of Westlaw and computerized legal research systems. I, III, V

D. Demonstrate a complete and thorough understanding of use law library materials necessary for basic legal research. I, II, III, IV, V

E. Demonstrate an understanding of uniformly accepted formats, styles, and citation methods employed in legal profession. I, II, III, IV, V

F. Continue developing a basic legal vocabulary. II, IV

*Roman numerals after course objectives reference goals of the Paralegal Studies program.

III. Instructional Processes*:

Students will:

1. Practice elements of the work ethic such as professionalism, preparedness, punctuality, honesty, cooperation, dependability, contribution, effectiveness, good manners, etc. Personal Development Outcome, Transitional Strategy

2. Refine their writing skills and expand their legal vocabularies through completion of weekly guided writing exercises that allows them to communicate more effectively with lawyers, legal professionals, and clients. Communication Outcome, Transitional Strategy

3. Carry out course assignments such as team discussions, team case studies, experiential exercises, oral, written, PowerPoint, WordPerfect, Westlaw, Internet skills development, etc. that help develop a respect for diversity. Communication Outcome, Personal Development Outcome, Information Literacy Outcome, Problem Solving and Decision Making Outcome, Cultural Diversity and Social Adaptation Outcome, Technological Literacy Outcome, Transitional Strategy, Active Learning Strategy

4. Take part in course assignments such as team discussions, team case studies, experiential exercises, oral, written, PowerPoint, WordPerfect, Westlaw, Internet skills development, etc. that help develop teamwork, leadership, and followship skills. Communication Outcome, Personal Development Outcome, Problem Solving and Decision Making Outcome, Cultural Diversity and Social Adaptation Outcome, Information Literacy Outcome, Transitional Strategy, Active Learning Strategy

5. Perform course assignments such as intensive writing exercises, team discussions, team case studies, experiential exercises, oral, written, PowerPoint, WordPerfect, Westlaw, Internet skills development, etc. that help develop critical thinking, problem solving, goal setting, and planning skills. Communication Outcome, Personal Development Outcome, Problem Solving and Decision Making Outcome, Cultural Diversity and Social Adaptation Outcome, Information Literacy Outcome, Technological Literacy Outcome, Transitional Strategy, Active Learning Strategy
Listen to guest speakers from the legal community to learn the demands for clear legal writing in the law office. *Personal Development Outcome, Transitional Strategy*

*Strategies and outcomes listed after instructional processes reference Pellissippi State’s goals for strengthening general education knowledge and skills, connecting coursework to experiences beyond the classroom, and encouraging students to take active and responsible roles in the educational process.*

**IV. Expectations for Student Performance***:

Upon successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Recognize and avoid acts that constitute unethical behavior.  A,B,C,D,E
2. Recognize what constitutes secondary authority in legal research.  B, E, F
3. Recognize what constitutes secondary authority in legal research.  B, E, F
4. Identify how to find research tools, such as digests and citators.  B,C,D,E,F
5. Identify and follow accepted rules or law library etiquette.  A,D
6. Describe the role of legislative materials within the context of the “civil law” system. B,F
7. Distinguish between state/federal law, criminal/civil law, and substantive/procedural law.  B,F
8. Identify and demonstrate working familiarity with standard legal publications.  B,C,D,F
9. Read, interpret, and use uniformly accepted legal abbreviations and citations.  C,D,E,F
10. Narrow the research focus by identifying and defining legal issues.  A,B,F
11. Research a concise, accurate case brief.  A,B,C,D,E,F
12. Formulate a query for computerized legal research.  C,D,E
13. Shepardize cases on Westlaw.  C
14. Search databases on Westlaw.  C
15. Maneuver between databases on Westlaw.  C
16. Sign on and off Westlaw and use client identifiers.  C
17. Save and print Westlaw research results.  C
18. Conduct several Westlaw searches.  B,C

*Letters after performance expectations reference the course objectives listed above.*

**V. Evaluation:**

**A. Testing Procedures:**

Westlaw Test. All students will be given an oral exam on Westlaw in a one-on-one appointment with the instructor. This exam will be conducted in front of the Westlaw terminal. The student will be expected to demonstrate understanding of basic concepts of
computerized legal research and basic competence in using Westlaw. This exam will be worth 20% points of the final grade.

B. Laboratory Expectations:

Students should expect to study and work in the law library and on Westlaw 2-10 hours per week while researching the law. Students should expect to spend several hours using Westlaw to prepare for their individual presentations.

C. Field Work:

Students will be expected to use resources at the law library to complete assignments

D. Other Evaluation Methods:

1. Class participation, group work, and homework will also comprise the final grade for the course. The instructor will provide full details the first week of class via a syllabus supplement.
2. All tests and papers will be graded for spelling and English usage in addition to content and format.
3. Any student encountering academic difficulty during the term is strongly encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss options and solutions.

E. Grading Scale:

Students will be evaluated on the basis of tests and assignments, which will be fully explained by the instructor’s supplementary syllabus the first week of class. The grading scale is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>65-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>64 and below</td>
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VI. Policies:

A. Attendance Policy:

Pellissippi State’s attendance policy is set out in the catalog. Students must be present for at least 75 percent of scheduled class meetings in order to receive credit for the course. Attendance is absolutely essential to perform well in this course. Absenteeism is recorded, not excused. Twelve (12) hours of absences will result in an automatic “F” for the course.

B. Academic Dishonesty:

Cheating of any type will not be tolerated and will become an automatic zero on that paper or test. Repetition of cheating will result in an “F” for the final grade.

C. Other Policies:

Late papers will not be accepted nor will make-up tests be given without specific approval of the instructor.