

INTRODUCTION TO LEGAL PROCESS

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SYLLABUS AND INTRODUCTORY MEMORANDUM

Welcome to law school. The purpose of this memorandum is to explain the operation of the Introduction to Legal Process class, which is held during the week of Orientation.

Course Description and Objectives

Introduction to Legal Process is designed to prepare you for law school. The specific objectives are twofold: First, you will be introduced to the skills of legal analysis that are essential not only for success in the legal profession, but for success in class as well. These skills include the ability to extract legal principles from cases and statutes, as well as the ability to communicate one's legal analysis orally and in writing.

Second, you will learn (or re-learn) information about the structure of government and the legal system, including fundamental aspects about the process of litigation. Some of that material will be familiar to you (especially those of you who have studied political science or government as undergraduates).

The lessons about the structure of government and the legal system are covered in the afternoon session on Wednesday, August 16; the evening sessions on August 15, 16, and 17 focus on the skills of legal analysis.

Learning in law school is different from learning at the undergraduate level. This course provides a transition between the two styles. Some students find law school to be intimidating because of the subject matter, the heavy workload, and the new vocabulary. Most important, law professors have different expectations of students than undergraduate professors do. Law professors expect you to prepare assigned material thoroughly before class, to participate in class discussions, and to synthesize and apply the course lessons to new factual situations.

So that you may meet your professors' expectations in the classroom and on the exam, you need to learn how to prepare for class. Therefore, this class will introduce you to case briefing, outlining, and analysis. And because law-school exams are starkly different from undergraduate exams, this course will conclude by addressing exams and exam-writing. As an undergraduate, you succeeded primarily by remembering information explained by your professor or your textbooks, and then parroting that information on the exam. Law school requires memorization, but it also values analysis; you must learn not only what the law *is*, but how to *apply* it. The typical law-school exam (like the typical assignment in legal practice) requires you not only to know the law, but to analyze how the law should be applied in a case where there has yet been no definitive resolution.

Course Materials

A handout is available in the “[Widener Law Commonwealth Pre-Orientation](#)” Canvas course. There is one assigned text, in addition to the handout. The assigned text is a portion of Katherine A. Currier et al., *Introduction to the Study of Law: A Critical Thinking Approach* (5th ed. 2020). **You must purchase and read the textbook *before* the start of class.** The textbook will be available by August 7, and will be accessible only electronically with a code that you will be given by that date.

We also recommend that you purchase a law dictionary to aid in your understanding of essential vocabulary.

Grading and Attendance

This course is graded pass-fail, and the grades are based on the examination. The exam will test both course objectives. There will be multiple-choice questions concerning the structure of government and the legal system, and there will be an essay question requiring you to demonstrate your skills of legal analysis. You must achieve a passing score on the exam (70% on the multiple-choice and an essay of acceptable quality) to graduate from law school. Students who fail to achieve a passing score during their first-year orientation will have to re-take the course until a passing score is achieved.

Attendance is required in person at all sessions and at the final exam. If an emergency arises requiring you to miss class, contact the Dean of Students.

Schedule and Assignments

Our class will be held in four sessions over three days, plus the examination. Complete all assignments *before* the classes in which they are listed. Note that these sessions are in addition to the mandatory Orientation sessions, which include such matters as introductions to the school’s administrative offices and personnel.

You will receive your class section assignments from the Registrar’s Office.

Class Session 1: Tuesday, August 15, 6:00-8:30 p.m.

Topic: Case Briefing

Assignment: Read the Case Briefing materials (pages 1-10 of the handout available in the Pre-Orientation Canvas course) and the Dog Bite Problem materials (pages 11-17 of the handout available in the Pre-Orientation Canvas course).

Class Session 2: Wednesday, August 16, 2:00-4:30

Topic: Government Structure and Legal Process

Assignment: Read the entirety of the assigned materials from *The Study of Law* (pages 23-154 of the text). You should think about, but you need not complete, the questions and exercises that appear in the book.

Class Session 3: Wednesday, August 16, 6:00-8:30 p.m.

Topic: Case Outlining

Assignment: Read *Dobrin v. Stebbins* and *Siewerth v. Charleston* (pages 18-22 of the handout available in the Pre-Orientation Canvas course).

Class Session 4: Thursday, August 17, 6:30-9:00 p.m.

Topic: Legal Analysis and Exam Writing

Assignment: Read *Nelson v. Lewis* (pages 22-26 of the handout available in the Pre-Orientation Canvas course).

Examination: Saturday, August 19, 9:30-11:45 a.m.