

LEGAL ANALYSIS AND WRITING I

SYLLABUS
SPRING TERM, 2021

Legal Writing Program Director

Professor Greg Johnson, gjohnson@vermontlaw.edu
Open Office Hours on Teams:
Tuesday, 9 a.m.—11 a.m.,
Thursday, 1 p.m.—3 p.m.
And by appointment (email me)

Teaching Assistants

Maggie Broughton, MaggieBroughton@vermontlaw.edu
Su Ghosh, SuhaginiGhosh@vermontlaw.edu

I. REQUIRED MATERIALS

Richard C. Wydick & Amy Sloan, *Plain English for Lawyers* (6th ed. 2019).

Harvard Law Review et al., *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (21st ed. 2020).

Course Packet (purchased at the Bookstore)

II. THE COURSE

This course has three major learning outcomes. By the end of this course, you will

1). Become proficient in the key principles of Plain English for lawyers; 2). Understand how to organize your legal writing using the IRAC method (Issue, Rule, Analysis, Conclusion); and 3). Be able to cite to basic legal authorities like cases, statutes, and regulations in proper *Bluebook* citation form. You will learn and apply these lessons through the following writing assignments: a short email in response to a partner's question; a two-page IRAC Exercise; a five-page Discussion Section of an office memo; and a seven-page Office Memorandum. You will be

required to follow *Bluebook* citation rules on all assignments after the email assignment. For the Discussion Section and Office Memorandum assignments, I will critique your first draft and return it to you with my comments. We will then Teams to discuss your draft. You will resubmit a revised draft incorporating my comments.

You will attend my lecture class on Teams on Monday and a Writing Lab (also on Teams) led by the TAs on Wednesday. The small-group Writing Labs give you an opportunity to work interactively with the principles discussed in my lecture. The lecture and the Writing Labs are both seventy-five minutes long.

III. THE WRITING SPECIALIST

Our Writing Specialist, Professor Jared Carter, is available to help any student with the mechanics of their writing, including grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, paragraph structure, and organization. You can meet with Professor Carter before you hand in a draft or after I have returned your draft. Email Professor Carter at jcarter@vermontlaw.edu for an appointment

IV. WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

All writing assignments, except the email assignment, must be double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides (the email assignment is single spaced). Use Times New Roman, 12-point font. You must number the pages of all papers. You must use *Bluebook* citation form on all writing assignments.

V. EVALUATION

Good legal writing involves sound legal analysis, logical organization, and a clear, effective style. I will evaluate each paper by assessing its legal analysis, organization, writing, and citation form.

The rules about late papers are strict: You must ask permission to turn a paper in late. Permission will be granted only for good cause. Good cause includes religious observance, illness, and personal emergency. Your paper will be marked down by 5% for each day it is late if you fail to ask for permission. One habit that lawyers must develop is the ability to meet deadlines. Therefore, you must turn in your papers on time. If you get behind, you will find it very difficult to catch up. Please submit papers on time!

VI. GRADES

Grades will be computed as follows:

(1) IRAC Exercise	10%
(1) Discussion Section Assignment	30%
(4) Office Memorandum	40%
(5) Class Participation	20%

Class participation includes drafting the email exercise, preparing answers for the *Plain English* exercises, and participating in class discussion.

VII. GUIDELINES FOR COURSE WORK

Your work and conduct in the Legal Writing Program, as in your other courses, is subject to the Vermont Law School Honor Code. The exercises and papers you submit should be your own work product. You may, however, discuss ideas about any assignment with your classmates.

Whenever you use the words or ideas of another writer, you should acknowledge the original source. If you use the exact words of another person, use quotation marks and cite the name of the author and publication. Cite the original source even if you put another person's ideas in your own words. Never copy directly from a source without a citation.

Good legal writing is the highest calling and an essential skill for any lawyer. We are looking forward to working with you this semester as you begin your journey toward excellence in legal writing.

Have a good semester!