Residential Real Estate Transactions
Syllabus

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Office hours by appointment only.

Meets: Every other Wednesday from August 31 to December 7 from 3:35 PM to 5:10 PM in Oakes Hall, Room 207.

Overview: As a one-credit course within the General Practice Program, Residential Real Estate Transactions will focus on a “typical” residential real estate purchase from the first contact with a client to the closing of the sale. The course will touch on legal doctrine and theory where necessary, but the classroom discussions and assignments will center on the practical aspects of the complex transaction. The goal of the course is to instill the skills necessary to manage the process from negotiation to closing. The sale, and, more particularly, the purchase of a home represents a major investment and commitment in the lives of ordinary clients. This course will help future lawyers develop the skills necessary to help clients through this stressful and, sometimes, difficult venture. The class will focus primarily on Vermont law as a means of creating basic skills that may transfer to other venues.

The real estate industry is still being impacted by COVID-19. The class will use a traditional transaction as the basis for learning. With an eye toward how logistics have changed in the current environment.

Learning Outcomes: Through a series of in- and out-of-class exercises and class discussions, students should finish this course with the ability to:

1. Use real estate laws and standards to analyze and work through transaction simulations
2. Construct and negotiate purchase and sales agreements and contract changes
3. Competently conduct title and deed research
4. Understand tax implications and forms for sales of property in VT
5. Guide a client through a complete real estate transaction and have a rough understanding closing schedules and requirements

Communication and Teams: Assignments and course materials will be posted to the course TEAMS page before each class. Written responses to assignments should be emailed to my VLS address on the Monday before the next class meeting. Please feel free to email me directly with questions. If you need to meet with me, we can set up a time for a virtual meeting.

A note on written assignments: Students should write assignments in the form and style required by the document type. Legal documents should take legal form, and communications between attorneys may have a more informal style. The focus of the writing should be the problem at hand and the critical thought necessary to reach a solution. Students should take this
opportunity to form the voice they will use when communicating with clients and other attorneys in the future.

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend class regularly. Missing class frequently or frequent lack of preparation will impact a student’s grade. Please email me in advance to explain foreseen and unavoidable absences.

**Final Grade for the Course:** The final grade for the course will be based on class participation (40%), weekly assignments (40%), and performance in final mock closing (20%).

### Class Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class One</td>
<td>August 31</td>
<td>The Purchase and Sales Agreement, Negotiations, Issues, and Parties Involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Two</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>Introduction to the Residential Mortgage Industry, Mortgage Forms, Discharges, and Payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Three</td>
<td>September 28</td>
<td>Title: Marketable Title, Encumbrances, and Title Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Four</td>
<td>October 12</td>
<td>Deeds: Drafting, Forms, and Searches in Various Land Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Five</td>
<td>October 26</td>
<td>Federal, State, and Local Taxes and Completion of Necessary Tax Forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Six</td>
<td>November 9</td>
<td>Introduction to Disclosures and Financial Statements Involved in the Closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Seven</td>
<td>November 16</td>
<td>Structure of the Closing and the Duties of Each Attorney and Escrow Agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Eight</td>
<td>November 30</td>
<td>Mock Closings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Eight</td>
<td>December 7</td>
<td>Mock Closings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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First Assignment

Before the first class, review and be ready to discuss a standard purchase and sales agreement (P&S). I have uploaded a mock P&S for a transaction we will use for class assignments. Be prepared to discuss any of the boiler plate language of the agreement that you find interesting or have questions about.

Class One

The Purchase and Sales Agreement and an Introduction to the Parties and Issues Involved

Goals
1. Outline the various parties involved in a residential real estate transaction and their various outlooks and vantage points regarding the transaction.
2. Introduce the P&S and review of contract property law theory
3. Identify and discuss the possible areas of confusion and concern regarding the P&S.
4. Discuss potential issues involved in negotiating a P&S and any necessary addendums

Class Two

Introduction to the Residential Mortgage Industry, Mortgage Forms, Discharges, and Payment

Goals
1. Understand a mortgage’s relationship to all parties involved
2. Outline the requirements of a mortgage and statutory forms
3. Review recording statutes and their relationship to mortgage priority
4. Look at the secondary mortgage market and federal regulation of mortgages
5. Understand the Due on Sale Clause

Class Three

Title: Marketable Title, Encumbrances, and Title Insurance

Goals
1. Understand to the recording system and chain of title
2. Review marketable title and issues that affect marketability
3. Discuss liens, discharges, and statutory considerations regarding “forgotten mortgages”
4. Understand title insurance, its necessity, advantages, and impact on the closing and parties involved

Class Four

Deeds: Forms, Drafting, and Searches in Various Land Records

Goals
1. Learn the conventions and requirements of all deeds
2. Discuss certificates and exemptions on VT deeds
3. Understand the recording system in both paper and online forms
4. Review plats and maps and how they relate to metes and bounds and legal descriptions
5. Review recording fees and options for recording documents
Class Five
Goals
1. Discuss federal tax implications of sales
2. Understand property tax prorations and allocations
3. Review the VT state tax forms and submission website

Class Six
1. Review closing disclosure forms and settlement statements
2. Discuss common prorations involved in settlement statements
3. Understand escrow agreements and duties of escrow agents
4. Discuss communications with clients, realtors, and banks regarding closing financial arrangements

Class Seven
Goals
1. Continue discussion of escrow arrangements and handling of closing money, wire fraud, and mortgage fraud
2. Final review of closing documents
3. Discuss the value of the closing agenda
4. Understand ethical considerations of being the only attorney at a closing

Class Eight
In-class mock closings