

Western Kentucky University
School of Professional Studies, Paralegal Studies
PLS 190: Introduction to Paralegal Profession
Fall 2016

Instructor: Jennifer L. Brinkley, JD, MA
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Office Hours: As posted or by appointment

Semester Hours: 3.0

Course description: This course is intended to introduce students to state and federal judicial systems and paralegal roles and careers. Emphasizes rules of professional conduct, legal ethics, and unauthorized practice of law by non-lawyers.

Course materials: This course is taught online via Blackboard. Basic computer literacy and familiarity with Blackboard is assumed; if this is problematic, the Instructor must be notified early on in the semester.

Required texts (available at the university bookstore or online):

Miller, Roger L. and Meininger, Mary. (2017) *Paralegal Today, The Legal Team at Work* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning: United States. ISBN: 978-1-305-50608-4.

(If the student purchases/rents a different edition of the text than the one listed, chapter references listed may need to be adjusted.)

Active course participation required:

This course requires active participation. Completing each reading assignment is vital for what is discussed in class. Please be prepared for assignments by complying with the reading schedule.

Course schedule:

These dates/assignments are subject to change at the Instructor's discretion. This schedule is preliminary in nature and may be subject to change as the semester progresses. Should revisions become necessary, changes will be distributed to students.

Dates:

Material Covered/Tasks:

Week 1: 8/22

Read Chapters 1 & 2 in Miller; Overview of Course; BB Postings

- Legal Terminology, Legal Profession

Week 2: 8/29

Read Chapter 3 in Miller; BB Postings

- The Inner Workings of the Law Office, Career Opportunities

Week 3: 9/7	BB Postings; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume and Cover Letter Exercises, Legal Technology Presentations
Week 4: 9/12	Exam 1. Read Chapter 4 in Miller for 9/19 class. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics
Week 5: 9/19	Continue Ethics Discussion; BB Postings
Week 6: 9/26	Read Chapter 5 in Miller; BB Postings; <i>Exercise 1</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources of American Law
Week 7: 10/3	Continue Sources of American Law Discussion
Week 8: 10/10	Read Chapter 6 in Miller; BB Postings; <i>Exercise 2</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Court System; Jurisdiction and Venue
Week 9: 10/17	Read Chapter 7 & 8 in Miller; BB Postings; <i>Exercise 3</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Research & Analysis; Online Legal Research
Week 10: 10/24	Exam 2. Read Chapter 9 in Miller 10/31 class. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Writing Form and Substance.
Week 11: 10/31	Read Chapter 10 in Miller; BB Postings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Litigation; Civil Process
Week 12: 11/7	Read Chapter 11 in Miller; BB Postings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking and Listening
Week 13: 11/14	Read Chapter 12 in Miller; BB Postings; <i>Exercise 4</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial Processes
Week 14: 11/21	Read Chapter 13 in Miller; BB Postings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal Process (compared to civil) • Legal Technology Project Due by 11/27.
Week 15: 11/28	Finishing up Criminal Process. Exam 3.

Grades: All written work must be typed in Microsoft Word, paginated, using 12 point font, with one inch margins, in Times New Roman font. **It must be turned in via a .doc or .docx document.**

Any other document will not be opened. Any sources cited must use the Bluebook, which is preferred in legal writing. Work is to be completed by the STUDENT only, unless specifically stated it is a GROUP project. Your participation is made up of discussion board and quiz scores given occasionally to ensure the readings are being completed. These quizzes may be in class or on Blackboard.

Exercises:	5% (each)
Participation:	20%
Examinations:	15% (each)
Legal Technology Project:	15%

Course learning objectives:

1. Students will have a basic understanding of the legal environment from the perspectives of paralegal, attorney, court, and client;
2. Students will be able to identify the ethical restrictions on attorneys and paralegal as well as the ramifications for violations of ethical rules;
3. Students will be able to diagram the state and federal court systems;
4. Students will be able to identify sources of law and use them effectively in conducting basic legal research;
5. Students will be able to think and write critically regarding selected substantive law topics;
6. Students will have a basic understanding of selected substantive law topics as well as rules of procedure governing practice in state and federal courts; and,
7. Students will understand the legal job market and be able to access and utilize job finding tools.

Course communication: A copy of this Syllabus will be posted on Topnet and Blackboard prior to the beginning of the semester. It is the student's responsibility to refer to the Syllabus regularly for assignment schedules. One of the requirements for this course is that the student monitor Blackboard regularly for assignments, deadlines, scheduling, and/or announcements.

Civility: Feel free to challenge previously held ideas of your own and of your classmates, but do so in a scholarly and respectful manner. Please understand that insensitive, rude, and/or degrading statements WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Any type of inappropriate post or response will be dealt with accordingly, which may result in loss of participation points, a warning, or removal from the course. **The Instructor retains the right to remove any student from the classroom for disruptive or disrespectful behavior.**

Americans with Disabilities Accommodations: In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact Student Disability Services at 270-745-5004. Please do not request accommodations directly from the Instructor without a letter of accommodation from Student Disability Services.

Academic honesty: Each student is expected to be on an Honor Code. This means all work will be completed by the student registered for this course. Any student not turning in their own work will be in violation of this Honor Code. WKU and its colleges desire to maintain the highest academic integrity. It must be clearly understood that acts of plagiarism or any other form of cheating or dishonesty will not be tolerated. Anyone committing such acts shall be subject to

disciplinary measures as outlined in the WKU Student Handbook, including but not limited to failure of this course.

Use of cell phones, laptops, electronic devices, etc.: Students are permitted to use these devices for note taking and other classroom activity that require Internet access as requested by the Instructor. Use of cell phones or other electronic devices for any other purpose is prohibited and constitutes disruptive behavior and/or violation of the Honor Code.

Attendance and participation: Each student provides a perspective that is important to the course. Students are expected to attend class and participate in person and online. Assignments and due dates will be made in class and posted on Blackboard. Late work will not be accepted, except in very rare circumstances which will include penalties. The Instructor retains the right to fail any student who misses one face to face class or fails to timely submit one online assignment without permission. No make-up examination will be administered unless the student's failure to timely submit has been properly excused. Excused absences of an emergency nature must be properly documented and determination of whether an absence constitutes an excused absence remains within the discretion of the Instructor.