

University of Arkansas - Fort Smith
5210 Grand Avenue
P. O. Box 3649
Fort Smith, AR 72913-3649
479-788-7000

General Syllabus

LEGL 1043 Introduction to Law

Credit Hours: 3 Lecture Hours: 3 Laboratory Hours: 0

Prerequisite or corequisite: ENGL 1203 Composition I or consent of department head

Effective Catalog: 2018-2019

I. Course Information

A. Catalog Description

Introduces students to the American legal system and provides a broad view of the various substantive areas of law. Emphasis on the role of the legal assistant in that structure and the development of needed skills in the profession

B. Additional Information

The initial emphasis on the course will be on examining different areas of substantive law. Within each topic, students will learn how legal assistants work in these areas. Students will also study the development of the profession of legal assistant as well as look at what legal assistants can and cannot do, in addition to ethical considerations.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

A. Subject Matter

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

1. Define at least eight different areas of the law and distinguish the similarities and differences between the areas.
2. Be able to identify the issues on both sides of a controversy.
3. In a hypothetical controversy, identify the appropriate court systems in which pleadings could be filed.
4. List the 16 steps of a civil lawsuit.
5. List 12 stages that a criminal case progresses through from the arrest to the appeal.
6. Name the types of legal documents that would be present in a civil or criminal case.

7. List the duties and the limitations of a legal assistant in any given area of law.
8. Describe the historical development of the legal assistance profession and discuss future trends.
9. Be able to write the definition of 235 legal terms.

B. University Learning Outcomes

This course enhances student abilities in the following areas:

Communication Skills (written and oral)

Students will prepare legal documents routinely used in the area of law being taught. Students will use correct legal terminology associated with the subject matter being taught.

Analytical Skills

Critical Thinking Skills- Students will identify the legal issues raised in a case or fact pattern as well as identify the rules that are relied upon to resolve the issues. Students will apply those rules to the issue or fact pattern and reach a logical resolution premised on and grounded in those rules.

Ethical Decision Making

Students will demonstrate an understanding of ethical issues inherent in the practice of law.

III. Major Course Topics

- A. The emergence of the career of the legal assistant and the duties.
- B. Historical basis and current structure of the American legal system.
- C. The court system.
- D. Legislation, the executive branch and administrative authority.
- E. Jurisdiction.
- F. Substantive and procedural issues.
- G. The law of contracts.
- H. The law of business.
- I. Property law.
- J. Family law.
- K. Estates and probate.
- L. Torts.
- M. Constitutional law, criminal law and procedure.