

WESTERN STATE COLLEGE OF LAW
SUMMER 2014
WEDNESDAYS 4:15 TO 6:15 PM

CALIFORNIA LEGAL RESEARCH

Instructors:

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SYLLABUS

I. Course Description and Goals

Our goals for this class are to help you develop legal research skills and strategies, improve your knowledge of the California legal system, and introduce you to valuable resources for researching California law.

Legal research is best learned through doing. While formal instruction is important, it's more important to get your hands dirty with actual problems. We will spend the vast majority of classroom time tackling legal research problems together. We will assign the traditional "lecture" component in the form of readings and watching videos, which you will need to complete before coming to class. Once class starts, we will dive right in and start working on problems. In class, you will apply the outside readings and videos to see how legal research principles work in practice. If concepts from the readings and videos are unclear, we can clarify any confusion during the course of working on the problems.

Because this class is *California Legal Research*, our focus is on California law and California research materials instead of federal law and federal research materials, though we will address researching federal law when appropriate. Our lessons will expand your practical research skills and awareness of California resources. These skills and knowledge take years to develop, and this class simply gives you a foundation for continued growth throughout your legal career.

II. Course Website

You should self-enroll in the "California Legal Research (Summer 2014)" course on Lexis Web Courses.

III. Course Materials

The required textbook for this course is *California Legal Research* (2d ed. 2014), by Hether C. Macfarlane, Aimee Dudovitz, and Suzanne E. Rowe. We recommend you purchase your own copy (they're pretty cheap), but three copies are available at the Library Reserve desk for 3 hour checkout. If you buy the book, please get the 2014 second edition and not the 2008 first edition. We haven't ordered this book to the law bookstores; however, you can buy it from the publisher (Carolina Academic Press), Amazon, or other online stores.

The entire book is less than 250 pages – so the readings are fairly short. In addition to book chapters, we may post links to videos or other materials on the web course.

IV. Course Outline

The general outline for the course is as follows:

1. Class 1 (June 4, 2014): Introduction to the Course & Overview of Legal Research
2. Class 2 (June 11, 2014): Secondary Sources for California Research (Part 1)
3. Class 3 (June 18, 2014): Secondary Sources for California Research (Part 2)
4. Class 4 (June 25, 2014): California Legislative Materials
5. Class 5 (July 2, 2014): California Administrative Materials
6. Class 6 (July 9, 2014): California Judicial Materials
7. Class 7 (July 16, 2014): Misc. Topics, Introduction to Legislative History, Review

V. Assignments and Grading

The schedule of weekly assignments (readings and videos) is as follows. (Please read chapters and watch videos before the respective class. You might not be able to participate fully without doing the assignments beforehand; and class participation is part of your grade.)

- 1. Class 1 (June 4, 2014): Introduction to the Course & Overview of Legal Research**
 - i. California Legal Research, Chapters 1 & 2
- 2. Class 2 (June 11, 2014): Secondary Sources for California Research (Part 1)**
 - i. California Legal Research, Chapter 10
- 3. Class 3 (June 18, 2014): Secondary Sources for California Research (Part 2)**
 - i. Same as Class 2
- 4. Class 4 (June 25, 2014): California Legislative Materials**
 - i. California Legal Research, Chapters 5 & 6
 - ii. "Introduction to Statutes" video (link to be posted on web course)
 - iii. "Researching Statutes" video (link to be posted on web course)

5. Class 5 (July 2, 2014): California Administrative Materials

- i. California Legal Research, Chapter 8
- ii. "Researching Regulations" video (link to be posted on web course)
- iii. "Researching Agency Decisions and Attorney General Opinions" (link to be posted on web course)

6. Class 6 (July 9, 2014): California Judicial Materials

- i. California Legal Research, Chapters 3, 4, and 9
- ii. Revisit California Legal Research, Chapter 6(VI), 10(VIII), and 10(XI)
- iii. "Researching Cases" video (link to be posted on web course)

7. Class 7 (July 16, 2014): Misc. Topics, Introduction to Legislative History, Review

- i. California Legal Research, Chapters 7 & 11

Remember, all weekly assignments need to be completed before coming to class. For example, for the June 25 class, you will need to have completed all the assignments under "Class 4" before June 25.

As mentioned above, class time will be spent working together to solve legal research problems. You will be expected to participate in class, both independently and with your classmates.

[Additionally, at the end of each class, we will hand out a short quiz for you to take. The quiz will cover the material we practiced during that class session and will be due at the subsequent session. It will be ungraded, but completing the quizzes will be part of your class participation credit.]

The final will be a research project integrating all the topics covered in class. It will be due July 25, 2014. We will give instructions for completing the final project and will continue to be available to answer your questions by email, telephone, and in person. The final requires you to work independently, reflecting your own efforts without input or advice from anyone (other than the instructors). If you are unsure about the rules regarding collaboration, please consult the WSU Student Handbook.

On the final, generally try to follow Bluebook, California Style Manual, or ALWD standards when citing to legal materials. However, grading in this class is based on factors other than citation style. (California Legal Research, Chapter 12, gives a basic guide to legal citation in California. It was published before the newest edition of ALWD, which follows Bluebook style. For the final assignment, feel free to use the previous ALWD if want. A few copies of the current Bluebook, California Style Manual, and ALWD are on reserve in the library.)

Class participation will be worth 30% of your final grade and the final will be worth 70% of your final grade.

VI. Instructor Availability

Normally, at least one of the instructors will be available in the library when the reference desk is open. Additionally, we check our email regularly. We ask that you direct any email inquiries to all three instructors. You also may contact us to arrange an appointment.

VII. Class Attendance

Attendance and participation are required in every class. A student who does not attend at least six of the seven classes will receive a failing grade unless special arrangements are made according to the provisions of the Student Handbook.

Note: This syllabus is subject to minor revisions.