

WESTERN STATE COLLEGE OF LAW
SYLLABUS & READING ASSIGNMENTS – VERSION 1.0

COURSE: LAW PRACTICE MANAGEMENT & TECHNOLOGY
SECTION: 429-A
SEMESTER: SPRING 2014
TIME: M 6:30 to 9:45 P.M.
PROFESSORS: PEDERSEN & DILLINGER

- I. **REQUIRED BOOKS.** The required books must be brought to all classes. You are expected to have read any relevant Rule of Professional Conduct or Business & Professions Code related to the material.

Jay G. Foonberg, How to Start and Build a Law Practice (5th ed. ABA Press 2004).
State Bar of California, The California Guide to Opening and Managing a Law Office (2008).
Richard Susskind, Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future

II. **OPTIONAL TEXT**

State Bar of California, The California Guide to Opening and Managing a Law Office (2008). This book is listed in both the required and optional categories because you are not required to purchase the book, but required readings will be assigned from it. There will be an adequate number of copies on reserve in the library for students to use.

- III. **COURSE OBJECTIVES & GOALS.** Law Practice Management is a one-semester, three-unit course. It is an overview of the issues and concerns a person must take into consideration when he or she decides to open his or her own law practice. It is not limited to the nuts and bolts of running a law office. Rather, the course material – readings and exercises – are intended to provide the student with an understanding of what is required to start and maintain a law practice that will provide not only a living wage but also a satisfying life. It is hoped that by the end of the course, each student will be able to decide whether this is a road he or she wants to travel. Students will learn the basics of day-to-day operation of a law firm. They will be expected to conduct themselves as lawyers and keep accurate written records of what they do for the course – they will maintain time sheets and a journal, keep notes, respond promptly to communications (e-mails, phone calls) from their professors and classmates, and complete all assignments in a timely and professional manner. Students will also complete a number of individual and group assignments which, by the end of the semester, will provide them with documentation that they will be able to consult and use if they decide to start their own practice. Every student will finish the course with a binder/notebook that they will be able to consult in the event they pursue setting up their own practice. Specifically, students will become familiar with the kinds of furnishings, technology, and supplies a law firm requires. Students will gain an enhanced appreciation of their ethical responsibilities as lawyers, not only to their clients, but to their partners, the justice system, and the profession. Students will better comprehend that the baseline conduct denominated what is ethical (below which discipline is imposed) is substantially lower than conduct which is “good practice” and which will make and maintain their reputations. Ultimately, students will understand the importance of risk management in every aspect of their professional lives as a lawyer.

- IV. **CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION.** Legal education is a cooperative venture. You must be prepared to participate in each class. In fact, **20%** of your grade in this course is based on your classroom participation. See also Examinations and Grading, below. Each of you will be assigned to a “firm” or group that will work together throughout the semester. Many of the assignments are firm or group assignments. Not only must you be prepared on individual assignments, but you must also be prepared for each of the group assignments and presentations. You will not be able to delegate your responsibilities to someone else in your group and expect to be able to ride that person’s coattails. That does not mean that a firm cannot allocate responsibility on a particular assignment or presentation. You, however, will be

responsible for your part of the assignment and/or presentation and your contribution to the presentation or assignment can affect the grade of your fellow members. It is important that you be prepared for every class. **If you “pass” or if you are demonstrably unprepared, you will lose 0.1 grade points (out of 4.0) on your final grade.**¹ See V. Class Attendance, below. Moreover, when you “pass” or are demonstrably unprepared, I will call on you in each succeeding class until you satisfactorily demonstrate you are prepared.

- V. **CLASS ATTENDANCE.** Attendance and participation are required for all classes.² Being on time for class is a simple courtesy to your fellow students and your professor. Coming late to class counts as a class absence.³ Leaving early or leaving for a prolonged period of time during class without prior permission, also counts as a class absence. Because of the cooperative nature of many of the assignments and the fact that other students in your firm are depending upon your contributions, students may have no more than one (1) class absence (out of the 14 class periods we meet). **Further, because of the nature of this class, you are required to notify the professors and the other members of your firm in writing at least 24 hours before you take an absence.** Students who accumulate more than the permitted number of absences will be administratively dismissed from the class. **You -- and you alone -- are responsible for keeping track of your attendance; you will not receive a warning that you have reached the allowed number of absences.**
- VI. **EXAMINATIONS AND GRADING.** There will not be any examinations in this course. Your grade will be calculated as follows: (i) **20%** for class participation (based on participation in class discussions, group or individual presentations, etc.); (ii) **20%** for firm (group) assignments (e.g., firm’s time sheet, engagement letter, social media policy, etc.); and (iii) **60%** for individual assignments (time sheets, journals, business plan, class presentations, etc.) Note that many of the assignments are recurring, i.e., you will be given an opportunity to revise your submissions during the course of the semester. Your grade, however, will also be based on the drafts you submit to us during the course of the semester. Each draft will comprise a component of your grade so you must put in the effort during the course of the semester and not expect that a last-minute surge will overcome a lack of effort throughout the semester.
- VII. **FORMAT OF ASSIGNMENTS.** Unless otherwise specified in this syllabus or in the assignment, all assignments are to be submitted on 8-1/2 x 11 inch paper, with one inch margins all around. Use **Arial 12 point** font. Page limits, if any, will be provided in the assignments themselves. Line-spacing requirements will be included with each assignment. Journals, however, must be double-spaced. **Put your name, not your student or exam numbers, on all assignments.**
- VIII. **SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS, INCLUDING JOURNALS & TIME SHEETS.** All assignments, including journals and time sheets, must be submitted electronically by e-mail to both Professor Pedersen and Professor Dillinger at the following e-mail addresses:

Professor Pedersen: npedersen@pedersenlaw.com

¹ See footnote 2, below. The time allocations for topics being covered may have been over- or underestimated. Therefore, you may be responsible for material we cover during two succeeding class periods. It is *your responsibility* to keep track of how far we have gone each week & be prepared for material that you may have read a week before. See XIV. Course Schedule.

² Each student, however, may be excused for *any* reason from *participating* in an *attended* class *once* during the semester by requesting an excuse from me *prior to* commencement of class that day. If you request an excuse by *e-mail*, you must send the e-mail the *day before* class to both Professor Pedersen **and** Professor Dillinger. Unless one of us confirms your request *before* class, however, you will not be excused. **This “one free pass” does not allow you to take an extra absence. NOTE: IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU ALSO INFORM THE OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR FIRM THAT YOU ARE SEEKING TO BE EXCUSED FROM PARTICIPATING IN CLASS. THEY ARE DEPENDING UPON YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS, ACCORDINGLY, YOU SHOULD CLEAR ANY INSTANCES OF EXCUSED PERFORMANCE IN CLASS WITH YOUR FELLOW FIRM MEMBERS BEFORE YOU COMMUNICATE WITH THE PROFESSORS.**

³ In addition, you will be the first person we call on. **If you are unprepared, you will also lose 0.1 grade points (out of 4.0) on your final grade.**

Professor Dillinger: carolyn@dillingerlawfirm.com

- IX. **DUE DATES FOR ASSIGNMENTS.** Unless otherwise specified in this syllabus or in the assignment, assignments must be submitted **by 11:59 p.m. of the day on which they due.**
- X. **LATE ASSIGNMENTS.** Late assignments will be assessed a 0.1 reduction in grade point on your final grade. For example, if you fail to submit your business plan by the due date, your final grade of 3.3 would be reduced to 3.2. **Failure to submit an assignment within three days of its due date will result in your dismissal from the course.**
- XI. **JOURNALS.** Your journal is a very important part of the course and will be a large component of your final grade. Guidelines on keeping a journal will be provided to you on the first day of class.
- XII. **OFFICE HOURS.** As adjunct professors, Professor Pedersen and Professor Dillinger do not maintain an office on campus. However, they will make themselves available after class each night for one hour to meet with students either in the classroom, if it is open, or in a location to be determined. They will also make themselves available for meetings at Professor Pedersen's law office in Irvine at other times, dependent on their work schedules. Finally, they will make themselves available for telephone conversations with students. To schedule a meeting or call with the ideal approach is an email to the email address provided above at least 24 hours prior to the requested meeting or call.
- XIII. **RECORDING CLASSES:** If you want to record a class, you must ask for permission *in person in the classroom* before each class you wish to tape. As a condition to recording a class, you must agree to making the recording available to every member of the class.

XIV. Course Schedule.

Week	Date	Topic	Goals of the Class	Reading	Notes/Assignments
1	1/13	<p>Introduction to professors, class goals, class syllabus, creation of firms and other administrative discussion</p> <p>Discussion of on-going time sheet and journaling assignments</p> <p>Discussion of semester-long business plan assignment</p> <p>Lecture – The Decision to Work For Yourself or For Others</p> <p>Panel Discussion: Western State Alum will respond to your questions about their decision to open their own firms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of course goals/objectives • Understanding of syllabus and assignments • Exploration of reasons to start a practice 	<p>Foonberg xxiii-xxviii, 3-42, 49-53</p> <p>Cal Guide 16-38</p>	<p>Complete Student Information Questionnaire and Self-Assessment Survey (Will be handed out in class and must be filled out and returned by email no later than midnight 1-20-14)</p> <p>Time Sheet Assignment will be handed out in class. First time sheet submissions due no later than midnight 2-3-14</p> <p>Journaling Assignment will be handed out in class. First journal submissions due no later than midnight 2-3-14</p> <p>Business Plan Assignment will be handed out in class. First submissions due no later than midnight 2-3-14</p> <p>Every student must prepare at least <u>one question</u> he or she wants answered by the panel. Some suggestions to get you started:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you start a practice? • How/when did you go about it? • What changes have you made? • What would you do differently? • What do you wish you had known? • Mentors/advisors? • Family obligations? • Family support?