

Western State College of Law
Honors Writing
Fall 2026

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Course Overview

Honors writing is an upper-level writing course that builds on the core writing curriculum you have already received. It is meant to challenge you with advanced study in logical and creative thinking, intricate analysis, sophisticated source synthesis, and more persuasive written and oral advocacy. By the end of the semester, you will produce a paper of publishable quality that is worthy of submission to a law review, legal writing competition, or professional journal.

Course Outcomes

With active engagement and completion of course activities, at the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Appropriately identify legal issues and provide relevant supporting objective and predictive legal analysis by citing relevant case law, public policy, and/or interdisciplinary sources with robust independent analysis. (PLO3).
2. Resolve complex legal issues by conducting effective legal research that utilizes key legal research activities to locate and critically evaluate appropriate primary and secondary sources as well as synthesize binding and persuasive authority. (PLO4).
3. Persuasively convey their legal doctrinal analysis and positions by adherence to relevant *discourse* norms both orally and in writing. (PLO5).
4. Effectively advocate for their legal doctrinal analysis and positions by adherence to relevant *rhetorical* norms both orally and in writing. (PLO6).

Course Requirements

- **Required Text:**
 - *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation*, 21st ed. (or 22nd)
- **Recommended Texts:**
 - *Scholarly Writing for Law Students*, Elizabeth Fajans & Mary Falk (2017, 5th ed.)
 - *Academic Legal Writing*, Eugene Volokh (2016, 5th ed.)

(Both texts are on Reserve in the Library, so I suggest taking a look at both before you decide to purchase. See which one you like best and/or whether or not it's worth purchasing.)

Attendance and Participation

Much of what you learn in this class is derived from class instruction, discussion, activities, and assignments. Hands-on learning is active learning and effective learning. Class instruction and activities will build on each other and help you outline, research, write, and draft your paper over the course of the semester. Class discussions and activities will enable students to share

their projects and learn from one another in a collaborative and supportive environment. As a result, it's important to participate actively and timely in the class discussions, activities, and personal reflections.

- A note about attendance: Honors Writing is a 2-credit class. *This means that students are able to miss up to 2 class sessions without participation points penalty. If you miss 3 or more class sessions your participation grade will be affected.* If you are in mock trial or participating in a competition and anticipate missing classes, please touch base with me to make sure that your learning is not interrupted and your participation grade is not negatively impacted.

Time Requirements for Class Participation

In addition to attending and participating in class each week, much of the work you will do over the course of the semester to produce your final paper will be outside the classroom. ABA Standard 310(b)(1) requires that students spend at least two hours of outside study time for every course credit hour. This means that you each week, must devote at least four (4) hours, on average, outside of the classroom, to this course. Writing is hard. Everyone's writing process takes much longer than they think, so I expect you'll have to have no problem with meeting this time requirement.

Course Online Learning Logistics

Class will have two components – a synchronous or live component conducted via Zoom and an asynchronous component managed through Western State's new (and as yet to be named though suggestions are always welcome) learning management system – <https://online.wsulaw.edu/>. Using this hybrid approach allows for the fullest learning experience.

- For Zoom, please follow the guidelines listed below.
- For the online components, you will automatically gain access to the Honors Writing course when you register. Please follow the login and access instructions in the separate instructional email.

Zoom URL

- Join Zoom Meeting

<https://wsulaw-edu.zoom.us/j/84561897577?pwd=aeZsNGumYdBHsbSw1LthHbkaZbs76a.1>

Meeting ID: 845 6189 7577

Passcode: 827006

Zoom Guidelines

- Find a dedicated quiet space to attend Zoom sessions, to minimize the chances that you will be disrupted during the session.
- Your camera must be turned on for the duration of the class. If desired, you can use the background settings in Zoom to create an artificial background that blocks the view of your space while still allowing you to be seen on camera.

- Come prepared, as you would for an in-person class. Participation in Zoom classes is as important as it is during an in-person class session.
- Do not multitask – stay focused on the class discussion – do not wander in and out of the Zoom session.
- If you have to miss a Zoom session, or arrive late or leave early, notify me in advance, as you would for an in-person class. (Sorry, if you're not there, I worry. Help me not worry.)
- If you have connectivity issues, whether it be long-term or short-term, that impact your ability to participate (e.g., if you are limited to dial-in without video), notify me so that we can explore other accommodations together.
- Do not post screenshots or recordings of any Zoom classes on social media. Such actions would constitute a violation of the Student Honor Code. All class Zoom recordings are posted the next day on our class online website.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) / Generative AI Usage

Generative AI tools, like Gemini and ChatGPT, can do your homework for you, but they cannot do your learning for you. Learning is a messy, life-long process that requires you to critically evaluate and synthesize new evidence, ideas, and opinions and then integrate new knowledge into existing schemas. This is hard work. Generative AI tools can help but they should not replace critical thinking, original contributions, and reflecting on your learning. In this course, generative AI tools can be used for brainstorming ideas, assisting in research, or editing your original work. You must use these tools responsibly. This includes inserting your human judgement and review into every step of the process. This also includes respecting copyright laws, not using AI to generate content that infringes on intellectual property rights, and most importantly don't violate the privacy rights of any Western State faculty, staff or student. This means don't upload any portion of this course content, assignment instructions, student information etc., to a generative AI tool. **Any use of generative AI must be acknowledged in your work by providing a brief description of how the AI tool was used in the creation of your work and citing the tool, as applicable.**

Submission / Formatting Requirements

All written assignments must be turned in via our online course in the related week's assignment drop box. Different assignments have different due dates/times:

- Assignments meant for in-class use and activities/exercises (e.g., reflective journals, source summaries) are due right before class begins at 9:59am.
- Assignments that include heavy analysis and more complex writing expectations (e.g., lit review, first draft, final draft) are due by the end of the day the assignment is due at 11:59pm.

For all assignments, including the final paper, please comply with the following formatting requirements:

- Typewritten, double-spaced, any standard font (e.g. Calibri, Aptos) 12-point font.
- One-inch margins for the top, bottom, left, and right margins

- Page numbers at the bottom center of each page
- Citations must follow *The Bluebook* (21st/22nd ed.)

Assignments and Grades

100 points total

- 55%
In-Class Exercise Participation (20 pts.)
Reflective Journaling (10 pts.)
Literature Review & Annotated Bibliography (15 pts.)
Paper Presentation (10 pts.)
- 25%
First Draft of Paper (25 pts. = 15 pts. (first draft) +10 pts. (voluntary section rewrite))
- 20%
Final Draft of Paper (20 pts.)

Just a quick note ... Reflective journaling is a very impactful way to help you learn. It allows you to examine your own learning process and the influences on and outcomes of that process. Because it's so vital in understanding who you are, it requires you to think beyond a quick knee-jerk, one-paragraph response to the prompt. I'm not looking for a novel, but I do want to help you understand and appreciate its value by expecting a substantive response.

Week	Date	Course Topics / Readings / Assignments
01	08/21/26 *In-Person* (Voluntary)	Topics: Introduction to the Course; Introduction to Each Other; Overview of class; Expectations; Logistics; Writing Histories; What we're doing here: the difference between a legal scholarly paper and a legal pleading (problem/solution) ULWR Assignment Due <i>Reflective Journaling Due: How do you describe yourself as a writer? What experiences have prepared you for this class? How have these experiences changed you as a writer?</i> Reflective Journal Due on 08/21/2026 by 9:59am submitted via online course drop box.

02	08/28/26	Topics: Library Research: Paper Topic Sources (e.g. Competition /Circuit Splits); Preemption; Inter-disciplinary sources Research Session: Searching case law, law reviews & other research-level legal analytical articles; searching non-law related material; searching non-primary and secondary sources ULWR Assignment Due Reflective Journaling Due: <i>How confident are you in your researching skills? What skill do you feel most confident in? Where do you see gaps in your researching skills? Should research analysis be different if you are writing for a legal pleading vs. a legal scholarly paper?</i> Reflective Journal Due on 08/28/2026 by 9:59am submitted via online course drop box.
03	09/04/26	Topics: Multi-text synthesis (Part 1): Critical Reading & Note-taking; Source Organization; <i>Questioning-The-Author</i> ULWR Assignment Due: General Paper Topic Due General Paper Topic Due on 09/04/2026 by 9:59am submitted via online course drop box.
04	09/11/26	Topics: Multi-text synthesis (Part 2): Summarizing; Annotated Bibliographies; Source Synthesis; Purposeful Literature Reviews ULWR Assignment Due: Pre-Discussion / Activity Due: Have 3 sources summarized into at least 3 bulleted issues each Summaries Due on 09/11/2026 by 9:59am submitted via online course drop box.
05	09/18/26	Topics: Structure and Parts of Scholarly Papers; different types of legal arguments; translating a general paper topic into a legal paper topic; topic scope; structure approaches; tone; audience consideration; AI Prompt Engineering ULWR Assignment Due: Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review Annotated Bib and Lit Review Due on 09/18/2026 by 11:59pm submitted via online course drop box.

06	09/25/26 *In-Person* (Voluntary)	Topics: Writing Strategies Collaborative Session; What's your writing style? How do you approach organizing research? Are you an outliner or a long writer? How much time do you spend writing each day? ULWR Assignment Due: Refined Paper Topic (Problem/Solution) Due Refined Paper Topic Due on 09/25/2026 by 11:59pm submitted via online course drop box.
07	10/02/26	Topics: Peer Review / Collaborative Writing Session ULWR: Return of Literature Review & Annotated Bibliography ULWR: Sign up for individual meetings with Sarah
08	10/09/26	Topics: No class. Work on research, outlining/organizing, and writing first draft. ULWR Assignment Due: Individual Progress Meetings with Sarah
09	10/16/26 *In-Person* (Voluntary)	Topics: Peer Review / Collaborative Writing Session; Breaking down article sections; problems? hurdles?
10	10/23/26	Topics: Audience Consideration: Footnotes; citations; following research trail Research Session: Following the Research Trail; Finding sources; Should you trust the citing author or read the article personally? ULWR Assignment Due: Pre-Discussion / Activity Due: List and describe 3 valued sources you found by following footnotes; potential uses in your paper? Why and how would you incorporate / not incorporate these into your paper. Sources Due on 10/23/2026 by 9:59am submitted via online course drop box.

11	10/30/26	Topics: Peer Review / Collaborative Writing Session; Focusing on your first draft; Editing; Revising ULWR Assignment Due: Pre-Discussion / Activity Due: What kind of feedback are you looking for? First Draft of Paper Due First Draft Due on 10/30/2026 by 11:59pm submitted via online course drop box.
12	11/06/26	Topics: Paper Presentations ULWR: Return of First Draft of Paper
13	11/13/26	Topics: Paper Presentations ULWR Assignment Due (optional): First Draft Selected Section Re-Writes Due Selected Re-Writes Due on 11/13/2026 by 11:59pm submitted via online course drop box.
14	11/20/26	Topics: Class Wrap-Up; Transferability; Where we go from here ... ULWR Assignment Due: Reflective Journaling Due: <i>What is one thing you will take away from this class? How will it impact your writing moving forward? How do you describe yourself as a writer as a result of this experience?</i> Reflective Journal Due on 11/20/2026 by 9:59am submitted via online course drop box.
--	12/11/26	ULWR Assignment Due: Final Paper Due on 12/11/2026 by 11:59pm submitted via online course drop box.

Western State College of Law

Programmatic Learning Outcomes

Western State College of Law's curriculum is designed so that every student achieves a level of competency prior to graduation in each of the eight Programmatic Learning Outcomes listed below:

(1) Doctrinal Knowledge

Students will demonstrate knowledge of substantive and procedural law in the core curriculum subjects, including Contracts, Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, Torts, Real Property, Business Association, Evidence, Civil Procedures, Constitutional Law, Estates, Community Property, Remedies, and Professional Responsibility.

(2) Practice Skills

Students will demonstrate the development of other law practice skills. Each student's chosen outcomes within this category will be varied based on the student's particular interests, coursework and work experiences. They may include, but are not limited to, the following topics: oral presentation and advocacy; interviewing; counseling; client service and business development; negotiations, mediation, arbitration, or other alternate dispute resolution methods; advanced legal research and writing (excluding purely academic papers and the first four units earned in introductory first-year legal research and writing class); applied legal writing such as drafting contracts, pleadings, other legal instruments; law practice management or the use of technology in law practice; cultural competency; collaboration or project management; financial analysis, such as accounting, budgeting project management, and valuation; cost benefit analysis in administrative agencies; use of technology, data analyses, or predictive coding; business strategy and behavior; pre-trial preparation, fact investigation, such as discovery, e-discovery, motion practice, assessing evidence, or utilizing experts; trial practice; professional civility and applied ethics; a law clinic that includes a classroom component; or a legal externship that includes a classroom component.

(3) Legal Analysis

Students will demonstrate the ability to identify the factual and legal issues implicated by a fact pattern and to appropriately use cases (including identifying the salient features of an appropriate precedent case, identifying legally significant similarities or differences between the precedent case and a fact pattern and explaining why those are legally significant) and rules (including the ability to connect legally significant facts in a fact pattern to the rule) to predict how a court would decide the issue. Students will also demonstrate the ability to identify and evaluate the public policies of a precedent case or rule and be able to evaluate how public policy can impact the application of a rule to the legal issue.

(4) Legal Research

Students will demonstrate the ability to locate relevant legal authority using a variety of book and electronic resources, and to properly cite to such legal authority.

(5) Communication

Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate both orally and in writing in a manner appropriate to a particular task to effectively convey the author or speaker's ideas. This includes audience sensitivity in written and oral communication (the ability to adopt a tone,

style and level of detail appropriate to the needs, knowledge and expertise of the audience); and written communication basic proficiency (the ability to use the conventions of grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction and usage appropriate to the task and sufficient to convey effectively the author's ideas).

(6) Advocacy of Legal Argument

Students will demonstrate the ability, in both oral and written formats, to evaluate the legal, economic and social strengths and weaknesses of a case and use case and statutory authority as well as public policy to persuade others. Making policy-based arguments includes the ability to identify and evaluate the public policies of a precedent case or rule and their implications and be able to assert such appropriate arguments to support a particular application or distinction of a precedent case to a legal controversy or a particular resolution of the application of a rule to the legal controversy.

(7) Client Sensitivity and Cultural Competency

Students will demonstrate an awareness of clients' needs and goals, including a sensitivity to clients' background and circumstances (including, but not limited to, socio-economic, gender, race, ethnicity, educational, disability and/or religious background(s)), the ability to make decisions that reflect an appropriate focus on those needs and goals, and awareness that cultural issues may affect the relevance of facts and application of the law.

(8) Legal Ethics

Students will demonstrate the ability to identify ethical issues in law practice contexts and make appropriate decisions to resolve such issues.

Disability Services Statement

Western State College of Law provides accommodations to qualified students with disabilities. The Disabilities Services Office assists qualified students with disabilities in acquiring reasonable and appropriate accommodations and in supporting equal access to services, programs, and activities at Western State College of Law.

To seek reasonable accommodations, a student must contact Senior Assistant Dean Donna Espinoza, Student Services Director and Disabilities Services Coordinator, whose office is in Room 276. Dean Espinoza's phone number and email address are: (714) 459-1117; despinoza@wsulaw.edu. When seeking accommodations, a student should notify Dean Espinoza of her or his specific limitations and, if known, her or his specific requested accommodations. Students who seek accommodations will be asked to supply medical documentation of the need for accommodation. Classroom accommodations are not retroactive, but are effective only upon the student sharing approved accommodations with the instructor or professor. Therefore, students are encouraged to request accommodations as early as feasible with Dean Espinoza to allow for time to gather necessary documentation. If you have a concern or complaint in this regard, please notify Dean Espinoza; or please notify Dean Halim Dhanidina at hdhanidina@wsulaw.edu or (714) 459-1168. Complaints will be handled in accordance with the College of Law's "Policy against Discrimination and Harassment."

***During our first class, the first person to say the word “bodacious”
(e.g., this class is bodacious!) will get a \$25 Amazon Gift Card. ***