

SYLLABUS

Pre-Trial Civil Litigation Fall 2026

Mondays from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Professor Hon. Nancy Zeltzer (Ret.)

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Required textbooks:

David Levine/Rochelle Shappel, Quick Review of California Civil Procedure, Fifth Edition.

Course Objectives:

1. Obtain an understanding of the litigation process, including litigation strategy and procedures, with an emphasis on hands-on experience.
2. Demonstrate the ability to identify the factual and legal issues implicated by a fact pattern and, as an attorney, determine appropriate courses of action on behalf of your clients.
3. Demonstrate the ability to locate relevant legal authority and case law regarding issues arising in civil litigation, with an emphasis on the pre-trial stages.
4. Demonstrate the ability to communicate both orally and in writing in a manner appropriate for an attorney to effectively advocate for clients and argue on their behalf.
5. Demonstrate an awareness of clients' needs and goals, including a sensitivity to clients' background and circumstances (including, but not limited to, socioeconomic, 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.

*Students will be expected to be familiar with the assigned reading. In addition to the assigned reading may be outside research, projects, case briefing and opportunities for extra-credit. **It is expected outside preparation will consume a minimum of two hours for every one hour in class.***

In this skills course, your professor will not lecture directly from the text, but will instead bring the text to life by using guest speakers, demonstrations, thought problems and specific exercises. Students are expected to draw on the reading materials to navigate through the obstacles presented and to contribute to class exercises. Course topics will include, but are not limited to, pleadings, motions, discovery, expert retention, hearings, and more.

Grades:

This is a skills course with an emphasis on building knowledge, strategy, and techniques to be utilized in civil pre-trial litigation. Class time will be devoted to learning both the theory and application of litigation through lectures, in-class exercises, role playing, and debriefing and analysis of challenging issues. Being present and actively engaged in discussions is required. 25% of your grade will be based upon in-class participation. 50% of your final grade will be based upon oral/written assignments.

Extra Credit:

It is the professor's practice in this class to offer learning opportunities by which students can earn extra credit. Such opportunities will be assigned as agreed in advance, between each student and the professors. Extra credit opportunities are not guaranteed.

Absence Policy:

This skills class puts a premium on actually being present and participating in discussions. Therefore, overall participation is twenty-five percent of your grade and attendance is a percentage of the participation grade. In a 30-hour course, up to 3 hours absence [one evening] may not affect your overall participation grade, and thus will not be counted against the percentage attributable to attendance. More than 3 hours absence, however, must be excused by your professor. Caveat: Even a 3-hour absence may significantly affect your participation grade in other ways. Please work with your Professors regarding any anticipated absences.

Class	Required Reading
Week 1 9/21/26	Introductions; Interviewing and Counseling Reading: Chapter 1& 2
Week 2 9/28/26	Initial Pleadings: Complaints; Answers; Motions Reading: Chapter 3
Week 3 10/5/26	Discovery: Written Discovery, Reading: Chapter 4
Week 4 10/12/26	Discovery: Depositions, Physical and Mental Examinations, Expert Discovery Chapter 4
Week 5 10/19/26	Disposition Without Trial Alternative Dispute Resolution Chapter 5
Week 10/26/26	Offers and demands. Negotiations Chapter 5 Chapter 5
Week 7 11/2/26	Dispositive Motions Chapter 5

Week 8 11/9/26	Trial Prep: Retained and Non-Retained Experts Chapter 6
Week 9 11/16/26	Trial Documents Chapter 6
Week 10 11/23/26	Chapters 7 & 8 Enforcing Judgments, Appellate Review,

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."