

## INTRODUCTION TO PARALEGAL STUDIES

Law 1101 / Spring 2023 / Section D807 / Tuesdays & Thursdays 10-11:15am / Namm Hall N-1007

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:45-2:30pm; other times by appointment; on campus or Zoom

Zoom meeting link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81380874817> (meeting ID 813 8087 4817)

**Course description:** An overview of the legal system and the role of the legal assistant within that system. Includes sources of the law; legal terminology; operation of the court system at state and federal levels; respective roles of attorney, client and paralegal; legal ethics and the Code of Professional Responsibility; interviewing techniques; and a survey of specialized areas of law. Prerequisite: CUNY proficiency in reading and writing. Corequisite: ENG 1101. Three class hours; three credits.

### Required texts:

- R. L. Miller and M. Meinzinger, Paralegal Today: The Essentials (7th ed.) (Delmar Cengage Learning 2017, ISBN # 9781305508743, "M&M"). Paper copies available for two hours in college library—request at circulation desk: **KF320 .L4 M55 2017**. Paper copy or e-textbook for rent or purchase through City Tech bookstore or publisher's website; new and used copies at Alibris.com and other sites.
- Access to a law dictionary and an English language ("regular") dictionary, print or online, to learn the meanings of unfamiliar terms. Online law dictionaries include thelawdictionary.org, dictionary.law.com, and legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com. Online English language dictionaries include dictionary.reference.com, merriam-webster.com/dictionary.htm, and thefreedictionary.com.

### Learning outcomes & assessments:

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes include:	Assessments include:
understanding paralegal roles, tasks, and skills	resume/cover ltr; demand ltr; exams & quizzes; discussions & activities
awareness of paralegal employment opportunities	resume/cover letter; discussions & activities
understanding and respecting lawyers' and paralegals' ethical duties	discussions & activities; exams & quizzes
understanding structure and functions of federal and state court systems	court observation; exams & quizzes; discussions & activities
understanding the purposes and importance of various types of legal research and writing	demand letter; exams & quizzes; discussions & activities

City Tech Gen Ed Student Learning Outcomes include:	Assessments include:
<u>Knowledge</u> : value knowledge & learning; show curiosity, desire to learn	court observation; Law in Culture Review; discussions & activities
<u>Skills</u> : communicate in diverse settings and groups, written and oral; derive meaning from experience, information from observation	court observation; Law in Culture; resume/cover letter; demand letter
<u>Integration</u> : understand and navigate systems.	court observation; exams & quizzes
<u>Values, Ethics and Relationships</u> : social and civic knowledge; organizations and histories of government; social and political issues.	court observation; exams & quizzes; discussions & activities

**Course grades** will be calculated as follows (each item addressed below):

Uniform final exam	40%
Midterm exam	20%
Quizzes	10%
Court observation	5%
"Law in Culture" Review	5%
Homework and other assignments	15%
Participation and professionalism	5%

Exams and quizzes: This course requires students to pass a departmental uniform final exam with a grade of 70 or better. If this minimum grade is not achieved then the student fails the course and cannot advance in the Law and Paralegal Studies program until she/he repeats the course successfully, then the previous grade of "F" will be replaced with the new grade. (See attached department policy, "Repeating Courses.") There will be a midterm exam and a final exam, both of which will be cumulative. Quizzes will be announced and may be unannounced. There will be no make-up exams or quizzes without prior arrangement. In calculating course grades, I generally drop each student's lowest quiz grade; however, if you miss a quiz, that counts as your "lowest grade" that will be "dropped," and I will average all of your other quiz grades. Regarding quizzes or exams missed for medical reasons, see attached college policy, "Accessibility."

Homework and other assignments: Students will complete a variety of homework and other assignments, some of which are listed in the Class Schedule in this syllabus, and others will be announced during the semester. Details on each assignment will be provided. Each written assignment should be submitted in the manner specified, such as paper copy, or email to me, or posting on our course OpenLab site. Except as noted, assignments are due at or before the start of class. If you submit an assignment late without advance permission, the assignment may be penalized or be rejected. Grammar and spelling always count—proofread everything! Retain copies of all graded work; if you believe there was a grading error, or you appeal a grade, you will be required to support your claim with such evidence.

Court observation: Each student will observe a New York State Court proceeding and provide oral and written analyses of the experience. Details will be provided later in the semester.

"Law in Culture" Review: Each student will read, watch, or listen to a cultural source relating to law, of your choosing, approved by me. You will then post a thoughtful analysis and review of your source on OpenLab. Details to be provided.

Participation and professionalism:

- *Participation.* "Participation" includes completing readings and assignments before class, and discussing them intelligently during class; being present, attentive and engaged in all class discussions and activities; taking written notes; listening and responding respectfully to everyone; and having all necessary materials. You will be expected participate voluntarily, and you will also be called on during class to participate. All of these factors will be considered in your grade.
- *Professionalism.*<sup>1</sup> A unique demand on Legal Studies students involves managing the fluid boundary between being a student and a working professional. Every interaction with faculty, staff, employers, and alumni involves developing your personal brand, reputation, and professionalism. Therefore, the Law and Paralegal Studies Department expects students to act with the highest standards of integrity, good judgment, and professionalism at all times, and will consider the following in your final grades for all our courses:
  - being punctual, present, prepared and engaged
  - submitting professional-quality work (such as proofreading and neatness)
  - responsibility for your learning and progress (such as seeking assistance from tutors and faculty)
  - interacting appropriately with peers, instructors, college personnel, and outside visitors

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<sup>1</sup> This section is adapted from City Tech's Dental Hygiene Department syllabi and the University of Ohio College of Business, "Student Professionalism Policies: Building Your Professional Reputation While Building Your Career," [https://business.ohio.edu/media/530713/ocm-student-professionalism-policies\\_2016-2017.pdf](https://business.ohio.edu/media/530713/ocm-student-professionalism-policies_2016-2017.pdf).

- respecting diversity among all individuals
- honoring the confidentiality, privacy, and dignity of all persons
- collaborating/participating actively in team environments
- learning, including giving and receiving constructive feedback
- behaving in an ethical manner (college/academic as well as outside/interpersonal settings).

When communicating via the Internet, please keep in mind the following "Netiquette" rules:

- Writing should be formal, using applicable professional/technical language.
- Writing should be clear and precise.
- Writing should avoid emoticons and "texting" or short-hand language/phrases.
- Writing should explain and justify any opinions.
- Writing should stay on topic; irrelevant tangents are confusing, so make sure every comment you post stays within the scope of the question/discussion topic.
- Writing which includes the intellectual property of others requires you to cite your sources, e.g. websites, books, blogs, journal articles, etc.

**Class sessions:** Except as announced in advance, all classes will be conducted in person, in Namm Hall room N-1007. Attendance will be taken during each class. If, on occasion, we need to meet remotely on Zoom instead of on campus, you will be informed in advance. If you do not have access to Zoom, please let me know so we can discuss other options for you to participate in online class sessions.

**Individual meetings:** Each student will meet with me individually, in person or on Zoom, at least once, early in the semester, to address any questions relating to our course, department, or the college; and anything else you'd like to discuss. We can meet as many additional times as you'd like!

**OpenLab and Blackboard:** All students are required to join and learn to use our course OpenLab (OL) and Blackboard (BB) sites. Particularly OL will be used extensively to provide assignments, materials and other information that may not be provided in class. You are responsible for all information on OL and BB.

**Technology:** Students are expected to have basic competencies in word processing, including Microsoft (MS) Word and Adobe (pdf); City Tech email; and the Internet. Students will be introduced to OL and BB. Per college policy, please only email me from your City Tech account. Allow 24 hours for a response, longer on weekends or when classes are not in session. CUNY provides MS Office 365 for Education (including MS Word, Powerpoint, Excel and other programs) and other tech resources to City Tech students. See <https://it.citytech.cuny.edu/servicecatalog/Categories/Resources/Student>.

**CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS, AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES MAY NOT BE USED DURING CLASS FOR ANY PURPOSE.** When class begins, silence them and put them where you cannot see them. If you believe you need a device for accessibility or other reasons, please talk to me.

**See the Addendum** for additional college and department policies.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Life is hard! Every day we all face threats of covid and other illnesses, racial injustice, potential violence, economic strains – in addition to our own personal stressors. I do not want this course to be a source of unnecessary stress in your life. Certainly, you should work hard, and take your education seriously. BUT if you find yourself facing challenges, in or outside school, that may affect your academic performance, please discuss it with me as early as possible so we can figure out the best way to proceed. It will all be OK!! We just need to work together. ☺

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**CLASS SCHEDULE**

Following is a general outline of meetings, topics, assignments, and important dates. It is subject to change, and additional assignments and events will be announced in class and on our course OpenLab ("OL") site; check it frequently for the most up-to-date information. Except as noted, all readings are found in the required text, Paralegal Today: The Essentials 7th ed. (M&M), and all readings and assignments are due at the start of the class for which they are listed. So, when class starts Tuesday, January 31, you should have (1) read M&M ch. 1 pp. 2-6; (2) confirmed you can access and use your City Tech email account and our course Blackboard site; and (3) sent me an email from your City Tech account with your contact information and times you are available to meet with me. Let's have a great semester! ☺

Classes	Dates	Topics	Readings & Assignments
1	Th Jan 26	Course introduction	
2	Tu Jan 31	Paralegal roles & skills; campus tour <i>Last day to make any changes to your semester schedule through CUNYfirst.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 1 pp. 2-6.</li> <li>• Confirm access to CT email &amp; BB</li> <li>• Email me contact info and times you are available to meet.</li> </ul>
3	Th Feb 2	OpenLab; paralegal roles & skills cont'd; "Law in Culture Review" assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 1 pp. 6-17.</li> </ul>
4	Tu Feb 7	<i>NO CLASS FOR US!!</i> Individual meetings instead, as scheduled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Register for course OL site and post "Who I Am!"</li> </ul>
5	Th Feb 9	Career opportunities: Where paralegals work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 2 pp. 20-31</li> <li>• Post law office on OL by 8am.</li> </ul>
6	Tu Feb 14	Career opportunities cont'd: Resumes and cover letters; how to write a resume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 2 pp. 38-52 and sample resumes posted on OL.</li> </ul>
7	Th Feb 16	Quiz #1; Career opportunities cont'd: peer review resumes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study for quiz #1.</li> <li>• Email first draft resume by 8am.</li> <li>• Post "Law in Culture" source on OL.</li> </ul>
8	Th Feb 23	Career opportunities cont'd: How to write a cover letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review ch. 2 pp. 41-44 and sample cover letters on OL.</li> <li>• Revised resume due by email.</li> </ul>
	Fri Feb 24	<i>WA grades assigned for immunization non-compliance.</i>	
9	Tu Feb 28	Career opportunities cont'd: peer review cover letters; finalizing resumes and cover letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email first draft cover letter 8am.</li> </ul>
10	Th Mar 2	Court systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email final resume &amp; cover ltr.</li> <li>• Read ch. 6 pp. 145-158.</li> <li>• Review court charts &amp; maps-OL.</li> </ul>
11	Tu Mar 7	Court systems cont'd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 6 pp. 155-158, 169-170.</li> <li>• Review court charts &amp; maps.</li> </ul>
12	Th Mar 9	Court systems follow-up: walking tour of local courts!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear comfortable shoes!</li> </ul>
13	Tu Mar 14	<i>NO CLASS FOR US!!</i> Quiz #2 on Blackboard instead!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study for quiz #2!</li> </ul>
14	Th Mar 16	Workings of a law office; timekeeping assignment!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 3!</li> </ul>
15	Tu Mar 21	Workings of a law office cont'd—review for midterm exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post timekeeping assmt-OL 8am!</li> <li>• Review for midterm exam!</li> </ul>
16	Th Mar 23	<b>MIDTERM EXAM!!</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study for midterm exam!</li> </ul>
17	Tu Mar 28	Advisement & registration procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review registration info on OL!</li> </ul>
18	Th Mar 30	Ethics & professional responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 4 pp. 85-99!</li> </ul>
19	Tu Apr 4	Ethics & professional responsibility cont'd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Answer ch. 4 pp. 100-118!</li> <li>• Answer Ethics Q 1 or 2 OR Practice Q 4 or 5 (p. 117)-OL 8am.</li> </ul>

	W-Th Apr 5-13	<b>SPRING RECESS!!</b> <i>No classes in the whole college!</i>	
20	Tu Apr 18	Sources of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 5 pp. 119-122 to "Remedies at Law..." and 126-129 "The Common Law Today" to "Constitutional Law."</li> </ul>
21	Th Apr 20	Sources of law cont'd: The U.S. Constitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 5 pp. 129-end.</li> <li>• Answer any <u>one</u> part of Practice Q 3 OR 4 on OL by 8am.</li> </ul>
22	Tu Apr 25	<b>NO CLASS FOR US!!</b> Quiz #3 on Blackboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study for quiz #3.</li> </ul>
23	Th Apr 27	Legal research & analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 7, pp. 175-201.</li> </ul>
24	Tu May 2	Legal writing: introduction and forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 9, esp. pp. 251-260.</li> </ul>
25	Th May 4	Legal writing cont'd: demand letter assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read demand letter assmt on OL.</li> <li>• Post Law in Culture Review-OL.</li> </ul>
26	Tu May 9	Legal writing cont'd: peer review draft demand letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email 1st draft demand ltr 8am.</li> <li>• Court observation post due—OL.</li> </ul>
27	Th May 11	Interviews & investigations; court observation oral presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final demand letter due-email.</li> <li>• Read ch. 11.</li> </ul>
28	Tu May 16	Quiz #4; review for final exam <i>Last day to withdraw from ANY course for "W" grade</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study for quiz #4.</li> <li>• Review for final exam.</li> </ul>
29	Th May 18	<b>FINAL EXAM!!</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study for final exam!</li> </ul>
30	Tu May 23	Course wrap-up and reflection, <i>and</i> what's next?!	
	Fri May 26	All final grades posted by end of today! ( <i>We don't meet.</i> )	

**HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!! ☺**

**Addendum: College and Department Policies**

**NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY POLICIES**

***Academic Integrity***

Students are responsible for understanding and following CUNY's and New York City College of Technology's policies on academic integrity.

Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions, and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the College recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity, offering models of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. The complete text of the College policy on Academic Integrity may be found in the catalog: [http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/academics/docs/academic\\_integrity\\_policy.pdf](http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/academics/docs/academic_integrity_policy.pdf).

Everyone is expected to do his/her own work and carefully cite the work of others. Plagiarism is taking another's work and using it as your own. This class will hold a ZERO tolerance policy for plagiarism. Evidence of plagiarism may result in failing a test, assignment and /or the course. Internet plagiarism includes submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers, paraphrasing or copying information from the internet without citing the source and "cutting and pasting" from various sources without proper attribution.

***Accessibility: Reasonable Accommodations***

City Tech is committed to supporting the educational goals of enrolled students with disabilities in the areas of enrollment, academic advisement, tutoring, assistive technologies and testing accommodations. If you have or think you may have a disability, you may be eligible for reasonable accommodations or academic adjustments as provided under applicable federal, state and city laws. You may also request services for temporary conditions or medical issues under certain circumstances. If you have questions about your eligibility or would like to seek accommodation services or academic adjustments, please contact the Center for Student Accessibility (CSA) at 300 Jay Street room L-237, 718 260 5143, or <http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/accessibility/>.

Students who miss a scheduled presentation or exam due to illness or medically related emergencies will be referred to the CSA. The CSA will review any documentation requested and give the student a letter to share with the relevant instructor if accommodations need to be made.

## NYCCT LAW & PARALEGAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT POLICIES

### ***Attendance***

It is the conviction of the Law & Paralegal Studies Department that a student who is not in a class for any reason is not receiving the benefit of the education being provided. Missed class time includes not just absences but also late arrivals, early departures, and time outside the classroom taken by students during class meeting periods. Missed time may affect any portion of the final grade overtly allocated to participation and/or any grades awarded for activities that relate to presence in class. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get the notes and assignments you missed from a classmate.

### ***Bluebook (Citation)***

The Department of Law and Paralegal Studies acknowledges the variety of citation styles; however, it is the department's policy that all citations are done in the format of The Uniform System of Citation (also known as The Bluebook).

### ***Repeating Courses***

Entrance into paralegal studies courses requires CUNY proficiency in reading and writing. All students admitted without such proficiencies will be required to complete necessary remediation and to obtain proficiency before progressing into paralegal studies courses. A minimum grade of "C" in each course with the prefix LAW is required for progression within the Paralegal Studies major. Students may repeat a LAW course once if they have received a "D" or "F" grade.

### ***Electronic Devices*** (including mobile phones and texting devices)

Electronic devices, including mobile phones and texting devices, must be turned off and/or silenced and put away during class. Laptop computers may be used with the permission of the professor.

### ***Computer Lab***

Do not leave your work on the hard drive in the computer lab. Print your work, save it on a flash drive and delete it from the hard drive. You are responsible for protecting your own work, in the event that two students turn in the same paper, both will receive an F. There is absolutely NO eating and drinking in the Law & Paralegal Studies Computer Lab.