

Practical assignment: Court observation! Counts for 5% of total course grade; graded on a scale of 1-5.

Course Specific Learning Outcomes addressed by this assignment include understanding structure and functions of federal and state court systems. **Gen Ed Student Learning Outcomes** include Knowledge (value knowledge & learning; show curiosity, desire to learn); Skills (communicate in diverse settings and groups, using written and oral means; derive meaning from experience, gather information from observation); Integration (understand and navigate systems); and Values, Ethics and Relationships (demonstrate civic knowledge; understand organization of government).

Overview: A common task for paralegals is to attend court proceedings, then provide written and/or oral analyses to supervising attorneys, to assist those attorneys in preparing for future proceedings. In this course, each student will attend a live court proceeding; post on OpenLab a written summary; and provide an oral reflection to the class.

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Court observation: Each student shall observe, for about one hour, a live proceeding in any court: state or federal, civil or criminal, trial or appellate, in any jurisdiction. If you attend the class court observation trip, you may use that proceeding as the subject for this assignment. If you do not attend the class trip, you should locate and observe a proceeding on your own. You are advised to get information about the court you plan to visit in advance, including schedules and visitor policies, such as whether they permit electronic devices. If you are permitted to carry an electronic device, silence it at all times. **When a judge is in the courtroom or a proceeding is taking place, PUT AWAY any electronic devices.** If you'd like help locating a proceeding to attend, let me know. Two students may observe a proceeding together; if so, each student should post a separate summary and they may provide the oral reflection together.

Written summary: By the end of Tuesday, May 9, each student shall post on our course OpenLab site a summary of her/his observation, with "Court observation" as the category. If you attend a proceeding on your own, please include the following information, in narrative, paragraph form (not bullet points as you see here):

- the date of your observation
- the name and location of the court (such as "NY Supreme Court, Kings County, in downtown Brooklyn")
- how you chose the proceeding, such as talking with court staff, looking at the court's website, etc.
- name of the case (such as "Jones v. Smith" or "People v. Coughlin")
- names and roles of participants, such as judge, plaintiff, defendant, lawyers, witnesses, etc. (as many as you can get)
- a short description of the proceeding, including what the overall case is about (such as medical malpractice, or personal injury, or armed robbery, including who allegedly did what to whom) and the nature of the particular proceeding you observed (such as a witness testifying during a trial, or lawyers arguing about evidence, etc.)
- your personal reaction to the experience: what you thought about what you saw, including how it affected your view of the law or your interest in a legal career, and why, and/or other issues
- any other information that you find notable or interesting, such as interactions with court staff, judges, attorneys, etc.

If you attend the class court observation trip, your post should state as such, and it need only address the last three points above: (1) a short description of what you observed, as best as you understood and can describe; (2) your personal reaction to the experience, as detailed above; and (3) any other information you'd like to include. The two cases we observed were USA v. Belliotti (first, witness testimony about JFK Airport entry and exit records); and USA v. Acevedo (second, witness testimony in a murder trial).

Oral reflection: During a designated class shortly after the class trip, or by Thursday, May 11 at the latest, each student will provide a short oral reflection to the class about her/his experience, including the points listed above and anything else they would like to address.

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If you have any questions, please ask!! And have fun. (That's a requirement.) ☺