

INTRODUCTION TO PARALEGAL STUDIES

Law 1101 / Fall 2017 / Section D702 / Room N-1023A / MW 11:30am-12:45pm
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Office hours: MW 10-11:15am, and by appointment

Course description: Three credits; prerequisites are CUNY proficiency in reading and writing; English 1101 is a corequisite. An overview of the legal system and the role of the legal assistant within that system. Includes the sources of the law; legal terminology; the operation of the court system at the state and federal level; 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.

Course objectives and learning outcomes include:

- understanding paralegal roles, tasks, and skills;
- understanding paralegal organizations, education, and certification;
- developing an awareness of paralegal employment opportunities;
- understanding the respective roles of attorney, client and paralegal in the legal relationship;
- understanding and respecting lawyers' and paralegals' ethical duties, and how they intersect;
- developing awareness of, and ability to identify, sources of law such as constitutions, statutes and cases;
- understanding the structure and functions of the federal and New York court systems;
- understanding the purposes and importance of various types of legal research and writing; and
- understanding the purposes and techniques of interviewing clients.

City Tech General Education learning outcomes include:

- Knowledge: value knowledge and learning; show curiosity and the 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
- Values, Ethics and Relationships: transform information into knowledge, and knowledge into judgment and action; demonstrate social and civic knowledge; understand organizations and histories underlying government; apply knowledge and analyze social, political, economic, and historical issues

Implementations and assessments of objectives and outcomes include:

- preparing a professional resume and cover letter to apply for paralegal employment;
 - drafting a demand letter on behalf of a fictional client, regarding a fictional dispute;
 - demonstrating client interview techniques in small group role-plays, presented to the class;
 - reading and reviewing a law-themed book, identifying course concepts and providing critical analysis;
 - locating and observing a federal or state court proceeding, and explaining in written and oral forms how concepts from our course applied in the proceeding and in your overall experience;
 - locating, reading and understanding news articles about current legal events and issues, and expressing orally and in writing how those issues relate to our course, and your analyses and judgments regarding them; and
 - exams, quizzes and other assignments, written and oral, completed alone and in groups, in and outside class.
- See p. 4 for specific objectives and outcomes addressed by each of these assessments.

Texts:

- Paralegal Today: The Essentials (6th ed.) by R. LeRoy Miller and M. Meinzinger (Delmar Cengage Learning 2014). Borrow from college library reserve desk (KF320.L42 M552 2014) or buy online or at college bookstore.
- Access to a law dictionary and an English language ("regular") dictionary, print or online, *e.g.*, thelawdictionary.org, dictionary.law.com (law); dictionary.reference.com, thefreedictionary.com (regular).

Grades: Course grades will be calculated as follows:

Midterm exam	20%
Uniform final exam	40%
Quizzes	10%
Court observation	10%
Book review	5%
Homework and other assignments	10%
Participation and professionalism (see below)	5%

The final exam is uniform throughout the department. Students must pass it with a grade of 70 or higher in order to pass the course and advance in the Legal Studies program. Otherwise, department policy requires students to repeat the course and the prior grade will be replaced with the new one. There will be no make-up exams or quizzes without advance permission. Late homework and other submissions will be penalized or rejected.

Participation and professionalism: Participation includes completing readings and assignments before class and being prepared to discuss them intelligently in class; being present, attentive and engaged in all class activities; and having all necessary materials with you in class. Professionalism includes conducting yourself in a manner appropriate to the legal profession, and taking responsibility for your own learning and progress.

Written assignments: All written assignments submitted on paper must be typed and double-spaced.

Handwritten work will not be accepted. Grammar and spelling count; proofread! Retain copies of your graded work; if you believe there is a grading error, you will be required to demonstrate it.

NYCCT Statement 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 [CUNY] and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion." Academic dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism, including plagiarism of Internet material. For explanations and examples of these and other forms of academic dishonesty, see the NYCCT Academic Integrity Policy Manual and the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity, both available on our course OpenLab site and the college website. You are responsible for understanding and adhering to those policies.

Technology: Students are expected to have basic competency in the following areas: (a) word processing, including Microsoft Word, Adobe (pdf), and printing of documents; (b) your City Tech email account (see "Email" below); (c) the Internet, including searching for information; and (d) Blackboard, City Tech's Internet-based course management system. Students will be introduced to OpenLab, City Tech's open-source digital platform for courses and other college functions, and to various forms of legal technology, including electronic legal research databases and software used in law offices.

OpenLab and Blackboard: OpenLab and Blackboard will be used extensively to communicate and provide assignments, materials, and other important information, some of which may not be provided in class. You are responsible for all information and instructions posted on OpenLab and Blackboard. Check them frequently.

Email: Per college policy, please email me only from your City Tech account. Please allow 24 hours for a response, and longer if you email me Thursday through Sunday or when classes are not in session. The college Welcome Center (Atrium 1st floor) can assist you with your City Tech email account.

CELL PHONE AND COMPUTER USE ARE PROHIBITED DURING CLASS, FOR ANY PURPOSE.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Below is a general outline of topics, assignments, and deadlines. It is subject to change. Readings are in Miller and Meininger's Paralegal Today: The Essentials 6th ed. ("M&M"). Please complete them before classes for which they are listed. Additional readings and work will be assigned in class, on OpenLab and on Blackboard; check them frequently.

<u>Classes</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Readings & Assignments</u>
1, 2	M 8.28, W 8.30	Course introduction; paralegal roles & skills	Ch. 1
3, 4, 5	W 9.6, M 9.11, W 9.13	Paralegal education & organizations; career opportunities	Ch. 1
6, 7	M 9.18, M 9.25	Workings of a law office	Ch. 2; <i>final resume and cover letter due M 9.25</i>
8	W 9.27	Court systems	Ch. 5
9, 10, 11	M 10.2, W 10.4, W 10.11	Court systems <i>cont'd</i>	Ch. 5
12, 13, 14	M 10.16, W 10.18, M 10.23	Sources of law	Ch. 4
15	W 10.25	MIDTERM EXAM	
16, 17	M 10.30, W 11.1	Ethics and professional responsibility	Ch. 3
18, 19	M 11.6, W 11.8	Ethics and professional responsibility <i>cont'd</i>	Ch. 3
20, 21	M 11.13, W 11.15	Legal research	Ch. 6
22, 23, 24	M 11.20, W 11.22 , M 11.27	Legal writing	Ch. 8; <i>ct. obs. written summary due W 11.22</i>
25, 26	W 11.29 , M 12.4	Client interviews	Ch. 10; <i>final demand letter due W 11.29</i>
27, 28, 29	W 12.6, M 12.11 , W 12.13	Oral presentations on court observations	<i>Book review due M 12.11</i>
30	M 12.18	FINAL EXAM	

Objectives and outcomes addressed by implementations and assessments described on p. 1:

- prepare a professional resume and cover letter to apply for paralegal employment
 - Objectives: understand paralegal roles, tasks, skills; awareness of employment opportunities
 - SLO: Skills – communicate through written and oral means; derive meaning from experience
- draft a demand letter on behalf of a fictional client, regarding a fictional dispute
 - Objectives: understand purposes and importance of legal writing; understand respective roles of attorney, client and paralegal; understand and respect lawyers' and paralegals' ethical duties
 - SLOs: Skills – communicate in diverse settings and groups, through written means; Values, Ethics and Relationships – transform knowledge into judgment and action; demonstrate social and civic knowledge
- demonstrate client interview techniques in small group role-plays, presented to the class
 - Objectives: understand purposes and techniques of interviewing clients; understand respective roles of attorney, client and paralegal
 - SLOs: Skills – communicate in diverse settings and groups, using written and oral means; derive meaning from experience; Values, Ethics and Relationships – transform information into knowledge and knowledge into judgment and action; demonstrate social knowledge
- read and review a law-themed book, demonstrating understanding of course concepts and critical analysis
 - Objectives: various, depending on the book's topic; likely to include understanding the respective roles of attorney, client and paralegal; understanding and respecting the nature and importance of lawyers' and paralegals' ethical duties; understanding the court system
 - SLOs: Knowledge – curiosity and the desire to learn; Values, Ethics and Relationships – analyze social, political, economic, and historical issues; Skills – derive meaning from experience, gather information from observation
- locate and observe a federal or state court proceeding, and explain in written and oral forms how concepts from our course were applied in the proceeding and your overall experience
 - Objectives: understand court systems; understand respective roles of attorney, client and paralegal; understand and respect lawyers' and paralegals' ethical duties
 - SLOs: 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; Values, Ethics and Relationships – demonstrate social and civic knowledge; understand organizations and histories underlying government; apply knowledge and analyze social, political, economic, and historical issues
- locate, read and understand news articles about current legal events and issues, and express orally and in writing how those issues relate to our course, and your analyses and judgments
 - Objectives: various, depending on an article's topic; likely to include awareness of paralegal employment opportunities; understanding roles of attorney, client and paralegal, and the nature and importance of ethical duties; awareness of sources of law such as constitutions, statutes and cases; understanding court systems
 - SLOs: Knowledge – value knowledge and learning; show curiosity and the desire to learn; Values, Ethics and Relationships – transform information into knowledge, and knowledge into judgment and action; demonstrate social and civic knowledge; apply knowledge and analyze social, political, economic, and historical issues
- exams, quizzes and other assignments, written and oral, alone and in groups, in and outside class
 - All objectives, including understanding paralegal organizations, sources of paralegal education, and licensing and certification of paralegals; and awareness of, and ability to identify, sources of law such as constitutions, statutes and cases.
 - All SLOs, including Knowledge – value knowledge and learning; Skills – communicate through written means; Integration – understand and navigate systems; Values, Ethics and Relationships – demonstrate social and civic knowledge; understand organizations and government; apply knowledge and analyze social, political, economic, and historical issues.