

**INTRODUCTION TO PARALEGAL STUDIES**

Law 1101 / Fall 2019 / Section D700 / Room N-706 / Tuesdays & Thursdays 10am-11:15am

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Office hours: Wednesdays 11:15am-12pm; Thursdays 11:15am-1pm; other times by appointment

**Course description:** 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. Prerequisite: CUNY proficiency in reading and writing. Corequisite: ENG 1101. Three class hours; three credits.

**First Year Learning Community: *Fight For Your Rights!*** This course is part of a First Year Learning Community (FYLC) together with Prof. Carrie Hall's ENG 1101 class that meets immediately after it. A FYLC consists of two courses with the same students, in which faculty and students collaborate in various ways such as topics and assignments, all centered around an interdisciplinary theme. The theme of this FYLC is "Fight for Your Rights!" because legal practice is all about fighting for RIGHTS, and WRITING is a practitioner's most powerful tool! See the [FYLC OpenLab site](#) for more information.

**Required texts:**

- Paralegal Today: The Essentials (7th ed.) by R. LeRoy Miller and M. Meininger (Delmar Cengage Learning 2017). Borrow from college library reserve desk (**KF320 .L4 M55 2017**) or buy online or at college bookstore.
- Access to a law dictionary and an English language ("regular") dictionary, print or online, to find out the meanings of unfamiliar terms. You may borrow a hard copy law dictionary from the college library for several weeks at a time (renewable); call numbers are KF156.G53 1996; KF156.B53 2006; and KF156.G53 2016. Online law dictionaries include [thelawdictionary.org](http://thelawdictionary.org), [dictionary.law.com](http://dictionary.law.com), and [legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com](http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com). Online English language dictionaries include [dictionary.reference.com](http://dictionary.reference.com), [merriam-webster.com/dictionary.htm](http://merriam-webster.com/dictionary.htm), and [thefreedictionary.com](http://thefreedictionary.com).

<b>Course-Specific Learning Outcomes</b> include:	<b>Assessments</b> include:
understanding paralegal roles, tasks, and skills	resume/cover ltr assignment; demand letter assignment; exams & quizzes; discussions & activities
understanding paralegal organizations, education, and certification	exams and quizzes; class discussions & activities
awareness of paralegal employment opportunities	resume/cover ltr assignment; class discussions & activities
understanding the respective roles of attorney, client and paralegal in the legal relationship	Court Navigator assignment; demand letter assignment
understanding and respecting lawyers' and paralegals' ethical duties, and how they intersect	exams and quizzes; class discussions & activities
developing awareness of, and ability to identify, sources of law such as constitutions, statutes and cases	case brief assignment; exams & quizzes
understanding the structure and functions of the federal and New York court systems	Court Navigator assignment; exams & quizzes
understanding the purposes and importance of various types of legal research and writing	case brief and demand letter assignments
understanding the purposes and techniques of interviewing clients	client interview exercise

<b>City Tech General Education Student Learning Outcomes</b> include:	<b>Assessments</b> include:
<u>Knowledge:</u> value knowledge and learning; show curiosity and the desire to learn	Court Navigator and book review assignments; class discussions & activities

<u>Skills</u> : Communicate in diverse settings and groups, using written and oral means; derive meaning from experience, gather information from observation.	collaborative assignments (issue-spotting, legal document analysis); Court Navigator; client interview
<u>Integration</u> : Understand and navigate systems.	Court Navigator assignment; court tour; exams & quizzes
<u>Values, Ethics and Relationships</u> : demonstrate social and civic knowledge; understand organizations and histories underlying government; apply knowledge and analyze social, political, economic, and historical issues.	Court Navigator assignment; court tour; exams & quizzes; collaborative assignment (document analysis)

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

Uniform final exam	40%
Midterm exam	20%
Quizzes	10%
Court Navigator assignment (written summary & oral presentation)	10%
Book review	5%
Homework and other assignments	10%
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 Legal Studies program until she/he repeats the course successfully, then the previous grade will be replaced with the new one. (See attached department policy, "Repeating Courses.") The midterm and final exams are cumulative. Quizzes will be announced and 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" and I will average all your other quiz grades. See attached college policy, "Accessibility," regarding exams missed for medical reasons.

Court Navigator assignment: Each student will spend several hours shadowing a volunteer Court Navigator in a New York court on a date to be arranged. Following the experience, each student shall post a short summary on the course OpenLab website (discussed below) and give an oral presentation to the class. Deadlines are noted in the attached class schedule; further details will be provided later.

Book review assignment: Each student shall read and write an analysis and review of a law-themed book of her/his own choosing, to be approved by me. Details on this assignment will be provided later.

Homework and other assignments: Except as noted, all written assignments shall be typed and double-spaced, submitted on paper at the start of the class when they are due. I will let you know if an assignment may (or must) be submitted in another way such as OpenLab or by email or in my mailbox in the department office. Otherwise, I will not accept assignments by email or in my department office mailbox or elsewhere without advance permission. Late assignments will be penalized or rejected.

Participation and professionalism:

*Participation.* This is a participatory class. In-class participation is critical, expected, and will be reflected in your grade. You will be called upon frequently to participate. Participation includes completing readings and assignments before class; being prepared to discuss them intelligently in class; being present, attentive and engaged in all class discussions and activities; taking handwritten notes on class work; listening and responding respectfully to other students' points of view; responding to my questions; and having all necessary materials with you (including pen and paper). Your grade for participation will include all of these factors; lack of preparation or participation will negatively affect your grade.

*Professionalism.*<sup>1</sup> A unique demand on Legal Studies students is 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 (e.g., proofreading, neatness)
- taking responsibility for your own learning and progress (e.g., seeking assistance from tutors or faculty)
- interacting appropriately with peers, instructors, college personnel, and outside visitors
- 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 (including 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 your opinion
- writing should stay on topic; irrelevant tangents are confusing, 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.

Extra credit: Students may earn extra points on the midterm and final exam grades by posting responses to legal news articles on our course OpenLab site. Details on this opportunity will be provided later.

**Other general policies:** Retain copies of graded work; if you believe there was an error, or if you appeal a grade, you will be required to support your claim with documentary evidence. Grammar and spelling always count—proofread everything! Per college policy, please email me only from your City Tech email account. Allow 24 hours for a response, and longer if you email me Friday through Sunday or when classes are not in session. The college Welcome Center (Atrium 1st floor) can assist you with email and other technical issues.

**OpenLab:** All students are required to join, and learn to use, our course OpenLab site. We will use it extensively to assign and submit work and to distribute materials and information, some of which may not be provided in class. You are responsible for all information provided through OpenLab.

**Technology:** Students are expected to have basic competency in: (a) word processing, including Microsoft Word, Adobe (pdf), and printing of documents; (b) use of City Tech email (see "Other general policies" above); and (c) the Internet. Students will be introduced to OpenLab, City Tech's open-source digital platform.

**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.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from City Tech Dental Hygiene Department syllabi and University of Ohio College of Business, "Student Professionalism Policies: Building Your Professional Reputation While Building Your Career" (particularly the introductory paragraph), [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).

## CLASS SCHEDULE

Below is a general outline of topics, assignments, and deadlines. It may change, in which case you will be informed. Chapters ("ch.") listed under "Readings & Assignments" are from Paralegal Today: The Essentials 7th ed. by Miller and Meininger. Readings and assignments are due at the start of each class for which they are listed. For example, when you come into class Thursday, August 29, you should have your (working) City Tech email address with you, a paper copy of your "Who I Am" essay, and a paper copy of "Mother Tongue" by Amy Tan which you will receive in Prof. Hall's English class. Additional readings and work will be assigned in class and on OpenLab ("OL"); check it frequently.

Classes	Dates	Topics	Readings & Assignments
1	Tu Aug 27	Course introduction	
2	Th Aug 29	Paralegal roles & skills; identifying legal issues; book review assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Tech email address</li> <li>• "Who I Am" essay due</li> <li>• Bring A. Tan, "Mother Tongue"</li> </ul>
3	Tu Sept 3	Paralegal roles & skills <i>continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A. Tan response due (FYLC collaborative assignment)</li> <li>• Read ch. 1</li> </ul>
4	Tu Sept 10	Career opportunities: Where paralegals work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OL post on law office</li> </ul>
5	Th Sept 12	Career opportunities: Resumes and cover letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 2</li> </ul>
6	Tu Sept 17	Quiz #1; peer review resumes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study for quiz #1</li> <li>• Draft resume due</li> </ul>
7	Th Sept 19	Guest speaker on Court Navigator Program: Angela M. Redman, Esq., Special Counsel, NYS Courts Office for Justice Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read information on Court Navigator program</li> </ul>
8	Tu Sept 24	Career opportunities: peer review cover letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft cover letter due</li> </ul>
9	Th Sept 26	Court systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final resume &amp; cover ltr due</li> <li>• Read ch. 6</li> </ul>
10	Th Oct 3	Court systems <i>continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review court charts &amp; maps on OL</li> <li>• ch. 6 Practice Qs 1 &amp; 4</li> </ul>
11	Th Oct 10	Quiz #2; walking tour of local courts!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study for quiz #2</li> </ul>
12	Tu Oct 15	Workings of a law office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 3</li> </ul>
13	Th Oct 17	Workings of law office <i>cont'd</i> ; review for midterm exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timekeeping assignment</li> <li>• Review for midterm exam</li> </ul>
14	Tu Oct 22	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study for midterm exam</li> </ul>
15	Th Oct 24	Ethics & professional responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 4</li> </ul>
16	Tu Oct 29	Ethics & professional responsibility <i>cont'd</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Answer ch. 4 Practice Qs 2 &amp; 3</li> </ul>
17	Th Oct 31 ( <i>boo!</i> )	Sources of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 5</li> </ul>
18	Tu Nov 5	Sources of law <i>cont'd</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Answer ch. 5 Practice Qs 2-4.</li> </ul>
19	Th Nov 7	Legal research & analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Curiosity Report" legal source analysis due (FYLC collab. asst)</li> <li>• Read ch. 7</li> </ul>
20	Tu Nov 12	Legal research & analysis <i>cont'd</i> : read & brief cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read case (tba)</li> </ul>
21	Th Nov 14	Quiz #3; peer review case briefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study for quiz #3</li> <li>• Draft case brief due</li> </ul>
22	Tu Nov 19	Legal writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read ch. 9 and answer Qs for Review 1-5</li> </ul>
23	Th Nov 21	Legal writing <i>cont'd</i> : Demand Letter assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read demand letter assignment</li> </ul>
24	Tu Nov 26	Peer review demand letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft demand letter due</li> <li>• <b><i>Deadline to post Court Navigator summary on OL</i></b></li> </ul>

25	Tu Dec 3	Interviews & investigations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Final demand letter due</li><li>• Read ch. 11</li></ul>
26	Th Dec 5	Quiz #4; client interview exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Study for quiz #4</li></ul>
27	Tu Dec 10	Court navigator oral presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Practice oral presentations</li></ul>
28	Th Dec 12	Court navigator oral presentations <i>cont'd</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Book review due</b> (OL)</li><li>• Practice oral presentations</li></ul>
29	Tu Dec 17	Review for final exam; course wrap-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review for final exam</li></ul>
30	Th Dec 19	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Study for final exam!</li></ul>

**ENJOY THE BREAK! ☺**