Syllabus
SPRING 2017 Legal Research
LAW 5803

Class Schedule:
Wednesdays 8:00 am – 8:50 am
Martin Levin Advocacy Center, Room 210
Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:00 pm-5:00 pm
(or by appointment)

Instructor:
Christopher Vallandingham
Holland Hall, 184K
273-0708
valland@law.ufl.edu

Course website: Accessible through Canvas.

Textbook:
MARK K. OSBECK, IMPECCABLE RESEARCH: A CONCISE GUIDE TO MASTERING LEGAL RESEARCH SKILLS (2ND ED. 2016)

Course Objectives:
The aim of this course is to introduce students to the basic principles of researching statutory and case law, both at the federal and state levels. State law will be emphasized, especially Florida law. Students will learn how to locate relevant statutes and case law using primarily electronic resources, including the use of secondary legal materials such as encyclopedias, treatises, and practice guides. Additionally, students will learn how to determine whether the cases or statutes that have been located are still valid law.

Course Schedule:
Legal Research is a two semester-long course, spanning the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters. There will be seven classes in the fall, and seven in the spring.

Grading:
The components of the final grade for the course are listed below:

Final Exam: 55%
Assignments: 40%
Attendance/Participation: 5%

The final grade for the course will be given at the end of the spring semester. No grade will be given at the end of the fall semester.

Assignments
There will be at least 8 written homework assignments for this course. Assignments must be uploaded to the course page by the due date. Turning in assignments after the due date will negatively impact your final grade for assignments.

Unless I indicate otherwise, you do not need to turn in a paper copy of your assignments.
**Final Exam**

The final exam, administered at the end of the course during the spring semester, is an essay exam that will test your ability to synthesize the skills you will have learned by the end of the spring semester and apply them to a set of legal research questions. This exam will comprise 55% of the course grade. The final exam will be graded anonymously using a curve.

**Core Competencies Assessment**

The core competencies assessment is a pass/fail measurement of skills that all students must possess to successfully complete the course. This assessment will be given during the spring semester. The results of this assessment will not be incorporated into your final grade. You must successfully pass this assessment to receive credit for the course and to take the final exam. The assessment may be retaken if necessary.

The skills tested include:

1. Ability to formulate a research plan
2. Ability to compile a list of general and subject-specific secondary sources on a legal topic
3. Ability to interpret legal citations
4. Ability to find the full-text of primary law given a legal citation
5. Ability to use an annotated statute to find cases interpreting the statute
6. Ability to search for cases in a specific jurisdiction using the Key Number and Headnote systems
7. Ability to verify that a holding in a specific case is still good law
8. Ability to find dockets, briefs and other pleadings
9. Ability to use legal information finding tools and methods (e.g., terms and connectors searching, natural language searching, indexes, annotations, and legal classification systems such as headnotes), and identify their strengths and weaknesses.

**Participation:**

The participation grade is determined by attendance, preparation for class, participation in class, and overall effort to complete the assignments, including contacting the instructor when you encounter difficulties with the assignment.

**Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Missing, without prior notice, 3 classes will result in referral to Student Affairs and possibly being dropped from the course.**

**Additional Information:**

**Disability Accommodation:** Students requesting accommodation must register with Student Affairs, who will provide documentation of the need for accommodation.

**Academic Honesty and Code of Conduct:** Students must adhere to the [UF Honor Code](#) and the [UF Conduct Code](#).
| Week 1: Friday, August 19, 2016 | • Introduction to course  
• Review syllabus  
• Introduction to legal research |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 2: Friday, August 26, 2016</td>
<td>The Research Process, Step 1: Plan Your Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3: September 2, 2016</td>
<td>The Research Process, Step 2: Consult Secondary Sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4: September 16, 2016</td>
<td>The Research Process, Step 3: Conduct Your Search for Primary Authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5: September 23, 2016</td>
<td>The Research Process, Step 4: Expand and Update Your Case Research (West Key Number System)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6: September 30, 2016</td>
<td>The Research Process, Step 4: Expand and Update Your Case Research (Shepard’s Citations Service, KeyCite)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7: October 7, 2016</td>
<td>The Research Process, Step 5: Analyze and Organize Your Research Results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>