

Syllabus

FALL 2018 Legal Research

LAW 5803

Class Schedule:

Fridays 9:00 am – 9:50 am
Holland Hall, Room 359
Office Hours: Mondays 1:00 pm-3:00 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 & Student Learning Outcomes

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. Florida law will be emphasized during the fall semester.

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Formulate a research plan;
2. Identify general and subject-specific secondary sources and use them to answer legal questions;
3. Distinguish between bills, session laws, and statutes;
4. Interpret the history table of statutes;
5. Determine where session laws have been codified in the Florida Statutes;
6. Determine where public laws have been codified in the United States Code;
7. Interpret legal citations for statutes, cases, rules of procedure, and regulations;
8. Find the full-text of primary sources given a legal citation;
9. Use annotated statutes to find cases interpreting a state or federal statute;
10. Search for cases in a specific jurisdiction using the West Key Number System;
11. Verify that a holding in a specific case is still good law;
12. Find dockets, briefs and other pleadings;
13. 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.

Course Schedule:

Legal Research is a one-credit course, spanning the Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 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:

Assignments:	50%
Final Exam:	40%
Attendance/Participation:	10%

The Assignments grade is broken down as follows:

Homework assignments:	80%
In-class assignments:	20%

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.

The law school grading policy is available at <http://www.law.ufl.edu/student-affairs/current-students/academic-policies#9>.

Class preparation

Students should anticipate spending a minimum of 3 hours preparing for each class. Preparation includes completing reading assignments and homework assignments.

Assignments

a. Homework Assignments

Assignments must be uploaded to the course Canvas page by the due date. **Late assignments are not accepted.** Failure to turn in an assignment by the due date will result in zero points for that assignment.

b. In-class assignments

The objective of in-class assignments is to make sure you remain engaged during class. In-class assignments must be uploaded by 9:55 am on the class day it was assigned. **Late in-class assignments are not accepted.**

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 not be during the final exam period established for the other courses in the 1L curriculum. This exam will comprise 40% 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. However, 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.

Participation:

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

The attendance policy for this course is in accordance with the attendance policy stated on the UF Law School's Academic Policies page at <https://www.law.ufl.edu/life-at-uf-law/office-of-student-affairs/current-students/academic-policies>.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Unexcused absences will negatively impact the course participation grade. Except in the case of excused absences, missing 3 or more classes will result in referral to Student Affairs and possibly being dropped from the course.

Use of Laptops

Students are required to bring laptops to each class to conduct legal research, access the course webpage, take quizzes, and take notes. All other uses are not permitted, including preparing for other classes, and using e-mail and social media websites. [Misuse of laptops will negatively impact your course participation grade.](#)

Use of cellphones and smartphones

Except in response to emergency calls or texts, students may not use their cellphones during class. If you have an emergency and need to use your cellphone or smartphone, please excuse yourself from class when responding. [Misuse of cellphones will negatively impact your course participation grade.](#)

Additional Information:

Disability Accommodation: Students requesting accommodation should contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) (a function of the Dean of Students Office and the Division of Student Affairs). The DRC is located in 0020 Reid Hall. Students may reach the DRC at 392-8565 or accessuf@dso.ufl.edu.

Academic Honesty and Code of Conduct:

Students must adhere to the [UF Honor Code](#). Unless directed by the instructor for a specific assignment, students are not allowed to work together on assignments or share answers.