

Computer Assisted Legal Research and Office Skills

Class Details

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Introduction

My name is Suzanne Schultz. I am the instructor for CALR (Computer Assisted Legal Research) online. With the new OU program format, we will also be covering office skills and computer software. I am a paralegal who worked in plaintiff personal injury and commercial defense litigation in the Detroit area for 25+ years. I have also worked in intellectual property, family law and corporate areas as well. I graduated from the OU paralegal program in 1984. I have been teaching this course in various formats at OU since 1999. The latest version is the online format beginning in 2008. In 2012, I moved to Austin, Texas and I am very happy to be able to continue teaching this course long distance!

Format

Most of our classes will be live online instruction with me on Wednesday nights, and other weeks you will be doing self-guided lessons and Westlaw tutorials that you can view anytime. I look forward to working with each of you this semester. Below are instructions for the beginning of the course. If you have any questions or concerns- call or email.

For this course, students report that they spend about 4-5 hours per week on classroom attendance, self-study and homework, plus some extra time on the mid-term and final papers.

We will be communicating primarily through email, but you are welcome to call me. I will respond to emails within 48 hours. If your question is preventing you from completing an assignment on time, please indicate this in your email or voicemail. If you do, you will receive an automatic extension until we talk and arrange an alternate due date. I will also be available on Wednesday evenings after our live online meetings and Wednesday nights when we do not have live online meetings on Wednesdays, for telephone conferences.

Weekly assignments will be posted to Moodle Rooms Wednesday of each week and are due the following Wednesday. Please submit your assignment to our Moodle Room. You can either handwrite your answers on the worksheet and scan [or](#) type your answers in a Word document.

WebEx allows you to hear me and see my computer screen. You communicate by typing in a chat bar on the screen. Applications like these are utilized for continuing education training and video conferencing in law firms- it is excellent experience for you. Make every effort to attend each live online presentation. There is no way to make up what you miss and it may affect your overall ability to complete assignments satisfactorily.

Keeping Track of Your Time

You will note on some of the homework there will be a spot for the answer and also a time column. Keep track of all the time you spend on each question. This gives you practice for timekeeping that is an important function in law firms, and it helps me assess whether you are getting the answer in a reasonable time- so I can give you additional help if needed.

As the class progresses, I will begin giving you time limits for each question. For example, beginning in Week 3, if the question indicates ____/.25- this would mean that you record your time, but you are not to spend more than 15 minutes on the assignment. You will not be penalized for not completing the question- if it is taking you more time, this generally means that you are on the wrong track and it would not be effective to continue. If you don't get the right answer within the time limit I will work with you to identify the problem with your research so you can go back and complete the assignment.

In your job as a paralegal, it is important to develop a sense of how long to spend on an assignment before you go back to the lawyer to get additional guidance so you don't waste time- we are trying to simulate this in the course and have found that it works quite well.

Westlaw

If you do not have your Westlaw password- or if it isn't working, please contact Linda Wallace, the program director before Week 3. Beginning with our live online session Week 3, you will need to have access to Westlaw to complete the assignments and to view the tutorials that will be assigned.

No Textbook

Instructor drafted work packet, legal research manuals provided by Westlaw® and resources will be available to students online. Since there is no textbook, you should plan on either printing all documents and maintaining a notebook, or downloading them to a file on your computer. Handouts will be posted during the week they are introduced. They will also be posted cumulatively in our Moodle room under the "course material" section.

Evaluation/Grading

There will be one major research project due at midterm and one major research project due at the end of the term and written work each week. The written assignments and tutorials constitute approximately 70% of your grade and mid-term and final research projects will each comprise 10%. The balance of the grade will be based on your overall participation and attendance.

Assignments must be turned in on time in order to receive credit for the assignment. Late work will not be accepted for full credit unless arrangements are made before the deadline. To receive an extension of through Saturday at noon, email me before the deadline. You don't need to wait for a response from me- the extension will automatically be granted. Any paper submitted late without an extension, or submitted after the deadline with the extension will receive a reduced grade.

Failure to complete any assignment with a satisfactory grade will result in a fail grade for the course.

Class Interaction

Sometimes we will be using the Moodle Room Chat platform to interact with each other. When a new thread is activated as part of an assignment, you must make a thoughtful post at least once during the week- by Wednesday at 6pm. You will receive extra credit of one point for each reply thoughtful reply posted by the following Saturday at noon.

Week One

There is no presentation this day, however, you must attend to confirm that you are able to connect to the meeting software. There will be a self-guided assignment posted in our Moodle Room. The assignment is due the following Wednesday by 6:30pm.

I will be online beginning at 6:30 am to greet you and assist with technical issues, if I can. I am not a tech expert- but I have experience with WebEx and may be able to help. If you can't connect- call me at (512) 815-6871 and I will call you to try to work through the problem.

Week Two

We will be meeting online for instruction for the first time beginning at 6:30pm. OU suggests that you login 15 minutes early the first week (so will I). So login, confirm you are connected, and we will start at 6:30pm. The link will be posted on Moodle for Week 2.

Topics Covered

Westlaw:

- Viewing all tutorials at Westlaw eLearning Center
- KeyCite (similar to Shepards)
- West Check Software (generates custom KeyCite reports)
- Using Westlaw features such as tabs, folders, search history, pricing and account customizing
- Boolean language searching- cases, statutes, regulations

Use Westlaw and Internet research to locate:

- Statutes
- Case Law
- Administrative Regulations
- Municipal Codes
- Ethics Opinions
- Administrative Agency websites (Rules and Bulletins)
- Court Websites
- Fact Research on the Internet

Web Tools:

- Assessing reliability- evaluating sources
- Browsers, Directories, Hidden Internet, Bookmarks
- Boolean language with Google, Yahoo etc.

Software:

- Microsoft Word, Outlook, PowerPoint and Excel
- Adobe

Timekeeping software
Litigation Document Management Software
Litigation Support Software
Trial Presentation Software

Skills:

Assignments are in the form of informal internal office memoranda
Validation for good law only
Citation Format- electronic resources only
Plan for legal research using online resources only
Email protocol for assignments
Timekeeping