

ENG U311 ADVANCED WRITING FOR PRE-LAW*
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY • FALL 2007 • MWTH 1:35-2:40

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Course Description

The law achieves its work through writing. In the United States, written laws include statutes (written by legislators), regulations (written by administrators), and cases (written by judges). Practitioners of the law (lawyers, paralegals, judges, etc.) spend most of their time engaging with — reading, analyzing, drafting, and revising — these written texts.

This course introduces you to some of the texts read and produced by legal practitioners. We will focus on how lawyers use these texts to solve problems and make recommendations for clients. You will learn to analyze statutes and cases, to derive rules from them, and to interpret these rules given real-world problems. These activities will help you learn what it means to “think like a lawyer.” This course also gives you practice in producing legal writing, such as office memoranda (the primary genre used by lawyers to explain their analyses to colleagues) and client advice letters (how lawyers convey that advice to clients). You will also write a personal statement and an LSAT writing sample, texts that are essential to the law school application process.

This course does not duplicate the content of legal writing courses in law schools, but is designed instead to help you develop the conceptual frameworks necessary for success in law school and legal careers. By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Read and interpret statutes and cases
- Derive rules from statutes and cases and apply those rules to real-world facts
- Draw analogies and distinctions between cases and real-world facts
- Explain your interpretation of legal problems and solutions in ways appropriate for the audience
- Enact rhetorical strategies considered appropriate for legal writing

Note: This course is a work in progress. If you have issues or concerns about the course, please do not wait until the end of the semester to voice them, as I may be able to address them immediately. Please talk with me, send me e-mail, or leave a note (signed or anonymous) for me in the English department office.

Required Texts and Materials

Schmedemann, Deborah A., and Christina L. Kunz. *Synthesis: Legal Reading, Reasoning, and Writing*. 2nd ed. New York: Aspen, 2003. Abbreviated SK in the schedule.

Wydick, Richard. *Plain English for Lawyers*. 5th ed. Durham: Carolina Academic P, 2005.

Both textbooks are available at the Northeastern bookstore and are on reserve at the Northeastern University Law Library. (For information on using the law library, see <http://www.slw.neu.edu/library/default.htm>.)

Readings (Schneider & Belsky; Carey & Adams; readings on plagiarism) on Blackboard (abbreviated BB in the schedule).

An account on myNEU for accessing Blackboard and for sending/receiving email. I send email through Blackboard; make sure that your email address on Blackboard is up to date and that you frequently check your email at that address.

* This syllabus is subject to change. You will be informed during class of any changes to the syllabus. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed, including any changes to the syllabus.

Assignments and Grading

I will calculate your final grade as follows:

Exercises (pass/fail)	5 %
Case brief	5 %
Case analysis paper	15 %
IRAC paragraphs	5 %
Office memo	25 %
Advice letter	25 %
Personal statement	5 %
LSAT writing sample	5 %
Portfolio	5 %
Participation	5 %

The criteria I use to evaluate assignments include focus, thoroughness, insight, sophistication, creativity, use of supporting evidence, and professionalism. My grading corresponds with the grading standards of Northeastern's first-year writing programs, which are described in detail at http://www.english.neu.edu/writingprogram/for_students/grades/.

Detailed information on each assignment will be distributed separately. Please save all assignments after they have been returned to you. You will compile them into an end-of-semester portfolio.

Daily Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Required Reading	Due
1	9/5	Introduction to the course		
	9/6	The lawyer's roles	SK ch. 1	Writing sample
PART I: LEGAL ANALYSIS				
2	9/10	Legal rules; plagiarism	SK ch. 2; SK p. 471; Plagiarism reading (BB)	Ex. 1 on p. 473 of SK; Plagiarism statement (BB)
	9/12	Reading and briefing cases	SK ch. 3; SK pp. 259-67	
	9/13	Reading and briefing cases (cont'd)	SK pp. 475-81	Case brief of <i>Moore v. Bunk</i>
3	9/17	Fusing cases	SK ch. 4; SK pp. 483-486	Ex. 1-3 on p. 486 of SK
	9/19	Fusing cases (cont'd)		Ex. 4-6 on p. 486 of SK
	9/20	Deductive organization, paragraphing; SK pp. 409-412 whole-class peer review		Case analysis paper (draft to hand in)
4	9/24	Style and punctuation	Wydict ch. 1-2, 9	Case analysis paper (draft to work on in class)
	9/26	Reading statutes	SK ch. 5; SK pp. 272-81	
	9/27	Reading statutes (cont'd)	SK pp. 487-489	Case analysis paper (final)
5	10/1	Interpreting statutes	SK ch. 6; SK pp. 282-90	
	10/3	Interpreting statutes (cont'd)	SK pp. 491-492	Ex. 1-3 on p. 491-2 of SK
	10/4	Deductive reasoning	SK ch. 8	
6	10/8	COLUMBUS DAY. NU CLOSED.		
	10/10	Deductive reasoning (cont'd)	SK pp. 501-502	Ex. 1-2 on p. 501-02 of SK
	10/11	Analogical and policy reasoning	SK ch. 9	
7	10/15	Analogical and policy reasoning (cont'd)		Ex. 1-2 on p. 503 of SK
PART II: ADVISORY WRITING				
	10/17	Office memos (discussion)	SK ch. 10 & 11; SK pp. 322-29	
	10/18	Office memos (discussion) (cont'd)		Outline of office memo discussion (Ex. 1 on p. 505 of SK; note: prepare an outline, not a box chart or other sketch)
8	10/22	Office memos (discussion) (cont'd)		IRAC paragraphs (Ex. 3-4 on p. 505 of SK)

	10/24	Office memos (issues, short answers, and conclusions)	SK ch. 12	
	10/25	Office memos (issues, short answers, and conclusions) (cont'd)		Ex. 2-3 on p. 507-8 of SK
9	10/29	Whole-class peer review		Office memo (draft to hand in)
	10/31	Workshop	Wydick ch. 3-4; SK App. III.B	Office memo (draft to work on in class)
	11/1	Individual conferences (no class)		
10	11/5	Workshop	Wydick ch. 5	Office memo (draft to work on in class)
	11/7	Client advice letters	SK ch. 14; SK pp. 336-339	Office memo (final)
	11/8	Whole-class peer review		Outline of advice letter (to work on in class)
11	11/12	VETERANS' DAY. NU CLOSED.		
	11/14	Style workshop	Wydick ch. 6-7	Advice letter (draft, 2 copies)
PART III: LAW SCHOOL APPLICATIONS				
	11/15	LSAT writing samples		
12	11/19	LSAT writing sample (35 minutes in class)		Advice letter (final)
	11/21-23	THANKSGIVING BREAK. NU CLOSED.		
13	11/26	Personal statements; guest speaker	Schneider & Belsky; Carey & Adams (BB)	
	11/28	Portfolio introductions; workshop on personal statements (whole-class peer review)		Personal statement (draft)
	11/29	Individual conferences (no class)		
14	12/3	Style workshop	Wydick (bring to class)	Draft of portfolio introduction; personal statement (final)
	12/5	Wrap-up. Evaluations.		Portfolio
	12/6	READING DAY. NO CLASSES.		
15	12/ /7-12/14	FINAL EXAM WEEK. No classes.		

Policies

Attendance, Deadlines, and Classroom Etiquette

Writing Programs policy requires regular attendance at class meetings. You are allowed three unexcused absences, i.e., class cuts, in classes meeting three days a week. *These cuts include individual conferences and any classes you may have missed before enrolling in the course.* Sleeping in class also counts as a class cut. For each additional cut after three, your final grade will be lowered by a full letter. You also have the right to a *limited* number of excused absences due to religious holidays, illness, a death in the family, required participation in athletic events, or other equally serious and unavoidable life circumstances. These will not count as cuts if you can provide a doctor's note or prescription, funeral service bulletin, note from a coach, or other similar written evidence. Because writing classes are conducted workshop-style and focus on revision, the student who misses too many class meetings or falls too far behind in making up work, even with a legitimate excuse, is simply not earning credit for the same course as the rest of the class. In that case, I may ask the student to withdraw rather than fail the course.

A missed class, excused or not, does not exempt you from the assigned work for that day. Work must be submitted on the day that it is due. Late assignments will be penalized by one third of a letter grade for each business day that they are late (for example, an A- will become a B+). (Note: Exercises must be handed in on the day that they are due; they cannot be handed in late.) Assignments that do not meet minimum standards of professionalism because of careless surface and presentation errors will be returned without a grade and penalized as if late until they meet these minimum standards. Careless errors include spelling errors, typos, formatting glitches, and failure to staple or paper-clip multiple pages. They *do not* include grammatical or stylistic difficulties that you may be addressing as part of your learning in the course.

Students are expected to behave with respect in the classroom, both to each other and to the instructor. Inappropriate language or tone of voice, interruptions, dominating class discussion, and other behaviors that might impede the creation of a safe and comfortable learning environment will not be tolerated, and could result in an instructor's dropping a student from a class, as well as a referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

A note on coming to class late: Please make every effort to arrive in class on time, as late arrivals disrupt class. I take attendance at the beginning of class by reading aloud from my roster. If you are not present when I take attendance, you are considered absent. If you arrive late, it is your responsibility to see me after class to change your "absent" to a "late." Sometimes being late is unavoidable; chronic lateness, however, indicates either a time management problem or a lack of respect for the class. (Note: Being late because of a printer backlog is not a reasonable excuse – so plan ahead. Do not expect to print out assignments for class immediately beforehand, as printer backlogs are inevitable.) Being late three times equals one class cut.

Grades in Required Writing Courses

A student must receive a grade of C or better in order to pass all Department of English writing courses (first year and AWD). (C or better in a required writing course is necessary for graduation.) No C- or D grades are allowed in writing courses in the Department of English. If a student's work in a required writing course is not up to the level of C, that student will receive a U grade and will repeat the course.

An F grade indicates that the student has not fulfilled the requirements of the course as specified in the course syllabus. A U grade indicates that the student has made an effort and has met all the requirements as specified, but is not writing at a C level or above. In effect, repeating the course with a U grade simply gives the student more time to work on her or his writing.

The instructor makes the final decision with respect to the final grade, if a passing grade. However, the decision of U or F—versus passing—is shared by an assessment group of three to four instructors at the Writing Programs' end-of-term portfolio review.

Format of Work

All work must be printed with a readable printer. (You may handwrite exercises as long as your handwriting is legible.) Papers should have 1" margins on all sides, and body text fonts should be between 10 and 12 point. Papers should adhere to commonly accepted standards of grammatical and typographical correctness, and multiple pages should be numbered as well as stapled or paper-clipped. I do not accept email submission of assignments. If you cannot hand in work during class, please put it in my mailbox.

Incompletes

I will assign the grade of incomplete only under extraordinary circumstances. In order to receive this grade, you must have completed most of the work for the course and have encountered an emergency (for example, serious illness or a death in the family) that prevents you from finishing one or two assignments. If you find yourself in this situation toward the end of the semester, talk to me as soon as possible before the last assignments are due. Please do not ask for an incomplete if you are having trouble completing work because of time commitments at work or in other classes.

Plagiarism

Northeastern University is committed to the principles of intellectual honesty and integrity. All members of the Northeastern community are expected to maintain complete honesty in all academic work, presenting only that which is their own work in tests and assignments. In English classes, this definition of plagiarism applies not only to borrowing whole documents (other students' papers, Internet articles, published articles) but also to borrowing parts of another's work without proper acknowledgment and proper paraphrasing or quotation.

All students must read the information on plagiarism provided on the Blackboard site for this course and sign the agreement at the end of the document, attesting that they have had a chance to review guidelines on plagiarism, and that they understand these guidelines.

A student suspected of plagiarism will be given an F for the course pending a Judicial Affairs investigation.

Writing Center Support

The Writing Center is in 412 Holmes (x4549; www.owl.neu.edu for hours) in the English Department. The Writing Center offers free and friendly help at any level, including help with reading complex texts, conceptualizing a writing project, planning, researching, organizing, drafting, revising, and editing.