

RHET 4320: Legal Research and Writing Course Syllabus

The University of Texas at Dallas

Professor Information

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course: RHET 4320

Section: .001

Meeting Time: T 4:00 PM-6:45 PM CB 1.106

Required Course Materials

Textbook: *Legal Writing for the Undergraduate* (1st edition)

Print or Electronic format

ISBN: 978-1543850222

Course Description

Legal Research and Writing (3 semester credit hours). Introduction to legal writing and research; focus on developing and framing legal arguments.

Graded Work

The tables below provide a summary of the graded work in this course and an explanation of how your final course grade will be calculated.

Summary of Graded Work

Assignments	Percentages
Personal Statement	10%
The Law & Social Change Assignment	10%
Case Brief I (<i>Bridge v. Oklahoma St. Dept. Ed.</i>)-Draft (2.5%), Peer Review (2.5%), Revision (5%)	10%
Legal Memo I (One Case)-Draft (5%), Peer Review (5%), Revision (10%)	20%
Three Case Briefs: II (<i>DeShaney</i>), III (<i>Doe v. Covington</i>), IV (<i>Estate of Brown</i>)	10%
Legal Memo II (Three Cases)-Draft (5%), Peer Review (5%), Revision (15%)	25%

Assignments	Percentages
The Client Letter-Draft (2.5%), Peer Review (2.5%), Revision (5%)	10%
Participation (In-Class: Socratic Method, Discussion, Activities)	5%

TOTAL: 100%

Final Grade

Percentages	Letter Grade
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
0-59%	F

Here are the links to [UTD Institutional Policies](#), [UTD Undergraduate Policies](#), and [Support Services](#)

Course Policies and Resources

Student Equity

All students are treated equally in this class. This means that everyone is held to the same standards, rules, and guidelines that are outlined in this course syllabus. I do not give preferential treatment or make exceptions for some individuals but not others.

What is a [syllabus](#)?

A syllabus like this one is a document for students that provides a guide to the course. Generally, a syllabus includes class policies, rules, regulations, texts (if any), a course schedule, and deadlines. A syllabus tells students what will be expected of them. **Policies in this syllabus are binding and non-negotiable.**

Communication Policy

Specific issues must be brought to my attention in a timely manner via email **no later than three days after the issue arises**. This applies to absences, emergencies, grade inquiries (see grade dispute policy below), assistance with course materials or policies, etc.

Technology & ELearning Course Usage Requirement

All assignments must be typed and submitted electronically to our Brightspace course either in Microsoft Word or PDF format. Brightspace does not read Google Docs or pages files, so if you use either of these tools, make sure to convert the file into a PDF before submitting the assignment. **I don't have control over ELearning, your specific device, or your software, so if you have issues or need help, please contact UTD Tech Support at 866-588-3192. If**

you are worried that your assignment did not correctly submit to ELearning, you may email it to me so long as you do so before the deadline (this is a good rule of thumb to follow in all your classes).

Please note: Having technology problems is not an excuse for late work.

Attendance & Participation

This class replicates a traditional law school class by using the Socratic Method. That means the course requires active discussion and participation. As a result, your attendance is required for both your own and the class's overall success. **You are allowed two absences—no questions asked.** If you have more than two absences, your participation grade (10%) will drop. If you miss more than three class sessions, you should withdraw from the class.

Class Recordings are strictly prohibited unless instructor has given permission or unless a student has documented, approved accommodations.

Late Policy

Unless a documented emergency arises, you have communicated with me in a timely manner, and I have granted your permission, late assignments are **NOT** accepted.

Extra Credit & "Do Overs"

None offered.

Grade Disputes

Any grade dispute **must be initiated no later than 3 working days after the grade posting.** If you disagree with my evaluation of an assignment and the grade I have assigned, I am always willing to discuss it with you and to reevaluate my assessment. I will ask that you do two things before we talk:

1. Take the time to carefully read and consider the assignment requirements and my feedback as you re-read your assignment.
2. Use the assignment description and grading criteria. Define the **specific reasons** that you feel that your assignment deserves a different grade.

Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, Recycling, and Cheating

All writing assignments will be submitted through Turnitin, services that check for plagiarism (this is not optional). **Scholastic dishonesty is a violation of the [UT Dallas Student Code of Conduct](#)** Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, recycling writing assignments, and collusion. Any forms of Academic Dishonesty may result in an automatic "F" in the course and be subject to [disciplinary action](#).

Bottom line: put in the work, write your own assignments, use your sources wisely and sparingly in your writing assignments, and correctly cite your sources.

Plagiarism Defined

Many issues with plagiarism specifically deal with a student's inability to cite sources correctly and in MLA Format. Sometimes this is intentional, sometimes it is unintentional. However, plagiarism is still plagiarism, regardless of "intent." Plagiarism not only consists of cheating, copying and pasting a source and claiming it as your own, recycling, or collusion, but also the following:

- **Lack of including BOTH in-text citations and a Works Cited** for every source used in a writing assignment.
- **Missing in-text citations:**
 - **Quotes** must include quotation marks of the exact language used from a source (“...”) and an in-text citation at the end of the quote. Works Cited must follow at the end. (The one exception is if you use the author’s full name in the signal phrase of the sentence).
 - **Summaries or paraphrases** include using your own words to describe something a source says. If you use ideas from a source, you must still give the source credit, even if you describe it in your own words. **In-text citations must be placed at the end of EVERY SENTENCE where you complete this task.** Works Cited must follow.
- **Inconsistencies between the in-text citation and the Works Cited.** The simplest way to remember this is that both the in-text citation and the Works Cited must **“match”** by beginning in the same way. Example MLA In-Text Citation: (Thomas 12); Example “matching” MLA Works Cited: Thomas, Eric. *Economic Theory and Global Warming*. Cambridge UP, 2003.

Bottom line: it is not the reader’s job to “guess” or read the writer’s mind when it comes to citing sources. It is the writer’s job to cite sources correctly and consistently with MLA format requirements. If an in-text citation does not “match” with a Works Cited, there is an automatic assumption of plagiarism, and you are placing yourself at risk. Citing sources effectively and correctly, having attention to detail, and possessing critical thinking skills are some factors that will determine your success as a college student and ultimately as a working professional.

Avoiding Online “Plagiarism Checkers”

While these tools may be tempting, they are not necessarily credible, exhaustive resources on which to rely, and I have seen students severely plagiarize and suffer academic penalties by depending on them. Instead, know how not to plagiarize and hold yourself (not a “plagiarism checker”) accountable.

Policy on [AI/Chat GPT](#)

In this class, using AI to “write” your assignments for you is **cheating**. You will earn a zero and I will report the incident to the Office of Student Advocacy. You are expected to read, analyze, use your own critical thinking skills, and write your own assignments. This should not be easy, and it should take time. It does not have to be “perfect,” but the writing must be your own.

Academic Freedom and Course Curricula

In college courses, professors are allowed [Academic Freedom](#). All lessons and materials in this course comply with the required learning outcomes that have been approved by the institution, [SACSCOC](#), the state legislature, and the Department of Education.

Disclaimer

You are a college student. This means that you will be subjected to many views, ideas, and perspectives. You may agree or disagree with some of the positions held by your professors or classmates. This concept is at the heart of the college experience and the reality in which we live. Consequently, we may be reading and having discussions on topics in our society that may create controversy (ie. issues that are racial, political, sexual, religious, etc.). As your professor,

my purpose is not to indoctrinate you to my personal beliefs or to cause you discomfort but rather to challenge you to examine yourselves in the complex, and sometimes disturbing world in which we live and (ultimately) to arrive at your own truths.

Trigger Warning

Our classroom provides an open space for the critical and civil exchange of ideas. Some readings and other content in this course will include topics that some students may find traumatizing. Dallas College does not require trigger warnings for classroom materials. However, to help create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity, I will do my best to forewarn students of sensitive materials about violence, harm, sexual assault, psychological distress, etc. Nonetheless, I am ultimately unable to preemptively identify others' individual triggers. So please contact me if you need assistance regarding this matter. If you need additional resources, please contact UT Dallas Counseling Services at counselingcenter@utdallas.edu

FERPA (Federal Education Rights & Privacy Act)

This law is designed to protect a college student's privacy. With respect to our class, this means that only the enrolled student may communicate with the professor about assignments, absences, grades, etc. A "FERPA Waiver" is a signed document that allows a third party (usually a parent) to access **a student's records only**. **This document does not allow a parent or other third party to communicate with the professor on the student's behalf**. College students are considered adults and are treated accordingly. **Parent-professor communications are strictly prohibited by federal law.**

Tutoring and Help with Writing:

- Writing tutors are available on campus and online. More info online at: [UT Dallas Writing Center](#)
- Additional help is available on-line at: [The OWL at Purdue](#)

Writing Tutor Disclaimer

Just because a tutor reviews your assignment, gives you feedback, and says, "you did a great job" does not mean you will earn an "A." Tutors' capabilities are limited, and they give general feedback. They are unaware of the nuances of your class or specific requirements. You, as the student are responsible for comprehending the course requirements, and you are held accountable for your own work.

Accessibility Resource Center

This resource assists students who have or think they have a disability that requires accommodations. Professors may provide accommodations only under the directive of Accessibility Services.

Fall 2024 Assignments and Academic Calendar

Week 1 T 8/20	In Class: Introduction, Socratic Method Read for Next Class: None
Week 2 T 8/27	In Class: Personal Statement, The Rule of Law, Assignment: Personal Statement Read for Next Class: None
Week 3 T 9/3	Assignment Due Before Class: Personal Statement In Class: The Law and Social Change, Court Hierarchy Watch: <i>On the Basis of Sex</i> (2018) Assignment: The Law and Social Change Read for Next Class: <i>Legal Writing</i> , Ch. 2 & 3
Week 4 T 9/10	In Class: Close Reading a Statute, Applying Law to Facts Read for Next Class: <i>Legal Writing</i> , Ch. 6
Week 5 T 9/17	Assignment Due Before Class: The Law and Social Change In Class: Legal Writing Fundamentals, Applying Law to Facts (cont.), IRAC Read for Next Class: <i>Legal Writing</i> , Ch. 4 "Reading and Briefing a Case" pgs. 19-29; <i>Bridge v. Oklahoma St. Dept. of Ed.</i> (2024) Assignment: IRAC Draft <i>Bridge v. Oklahoma</i> (2024)
Week 6 T 9/24	In Class: The Revision Process In Class: Reading and Briefing a Case In Class: Workshop IRAC & Briefing <i>Bridge v. Oklahoma</i> (2024) Read Before Class: <i>Legal Writing</i> , Ch. 7, "Introduction to Legal Memoranda," pgs. 105-114; Ch. 8 "One Case Memorandum" Ch. 8. pgs. 123-134 Assignment: Drafts sent to peer review group at least 3 days before class Assignment: Bring Peer Review Critiques next class
Week 7 T 10/1	Assignments Due Before Class: Case Brief Draft and Critiques In Class: Case Brief peer review <i>Bridge v. Oklahoma</i> (2024) In Class: Bring Draft & Peer Review Critiques to class In Class: The Legal Memo I
Week 8 T 10/8	Assignment Due Before Class: Revised Case Brief I (<i>Bridge v. Oklahoma</i>) In Class: The Legal Memo I Workshop Assignment: Drafts sent to peer review group at least 3 days before class Assignment: Bring Peer Review Critiques next class
Week 9 T 10/15	Assignment Due Before Class: Legal Memo I Drafts and Peer Review Critiques In Class: Bring Draft & Peer Review Critiques to class In Class: The Legal Memo I Peer Review Read Before Next Class: <i>Legal Writing</i> Ch. 9 "Three Case Memo" Ch. 4 pgs. 29-36; <i>DeShaney v. Winnebago</i> (Case Brief II); Ch. 5 pgs. 51-96 <i>Doe v. Covington</i> (Case Brief III) & <i>Estate of Brown v. Cypress</i> (Case Brief IV) Before next class: Bring drafts of the 3 briefs to class

Week 10 T 10/22	Assignment Due Before Class: The Revised Legal Memo I In Class: Legal Memo II (Three Cases) In Class: 3-Case Brief Workshop Assignments Due Before Next Class: 3 Briefs (<i>DeShaney, Doe, & Estate of Brown</i>) Read before next class: Read: Substantive Due Process Memorandum <i>Legal Writing for the Undergraduate</i> , Ch. 9 pgs. 164-167. Stop at “Issues Presented.” (The “Issues Presented” in the book will be different from this assignment).
Week 11 T 10/29	Assignment Due Before Class: 3 Briefs (<i>DeShaney, Doe, & Estate of Brown</i>) In Class: Legal Memo II Workshop Assignment: Drafts sent to peer review group at least 3 days before class Assignment: Bring Peer Review Critiques next class
Week 12 T 11/5	Assignment Due Before Class: Legal Memo II and Peer Review Critiques In Class: Legal Memo II Peer Review In Class: The Client Letter In Class: The UTD ULR Blog Post (Extra Credit)
Week 13 T 11/12	Assignment Due Before Class: The Revised Legal Memo II No Class: Independent Writing Day Assignment: Drafts sent to peer review group at least 3 days before class Assignment: Bring Peer Review Critiques next class
Week 14 T 11/19	Assignment Due Before Class: The Client Letter Draft & Peer Review Critiques In Class: The Client Letter Peer Review
Winter Break 11/25-11/29	
Week 15 T 12/3	Assignments Due Before Class: The Revised Client Letter & The UTD ULR Blog Post (Extra Credit) In Class: TBA
Week 16	Finals Week. Congratulations on Completing the Class