

Florida State University College of Law
Legal Writing & Research I
Fall 2026 Syllabus
Kimberly S. Parsons

A. Course Information

Class Location and Time	Room 210, Tuesdays and Fridays from 11:00-12:00
Office Location	Room 202
Office Hours	Tuesday 3:15-4:15; Friday 12-1
Professor E-Mail Address	kparsons@law.fsu.edu

You are strongly encouraged to contact me with any comments, concerns, or questions that you may have. I will communicate via Canvas and e-mail; please check them both on a regular basis for updates and changes.

Required textbooks:

- *A Lawyer Writes: A Practical Guide to Legal Analysis*, by Coughlin, Rocklin, Patrick (Carolina Academic Press 4th ed. 2024)
- *The Bluebook, A Uniform System of Citation* (22nd ed.)
- Core Grammar for Lawyers (1-year online subscription), by McKinney and Pryal (Carolina Academic Press 2011)
<https://cap.press.com/coregrammar/info.php?uid=MTY4NjE3&sid=Njg=>,
Class Code for registration: *coming soon*

B. Course Objectives

The focus of Legal Writing & Research I is objective writing. You will learn how to predict the outcome of a legal problem. In particular, you will learn:

- How to research and analyze the applicable law and distill key rules
- How to apply the law to a specific fact pattern
- How to organize and write an analysis of the law
- How to properly cite legal materials
- How to use appropriate grammar for lawyers
- How to evaluate, revise, and edit your work

To practice these skills, you will draft three office memoranda, each one increasing in complexity. You will also participate in small-group exercises, attend one-on-one writing conferences, and complete research, citation, and grammar lessons.

C. Attendance

Class attendance (including scheduled conferences and special sessions) is mandatory. If you miss more than 20 percent of the scheduled classes for any reason, you may be dropped administratively from Legal Writing & Research I. Attendance includes the obligation to arrive on time and to satisfactorily complete reading assignments before class. You are responsible for obtaining from a classmate any assignments, handouts, and notes for missed classes. If you expect to miss a class, please let me know in advance.

At a minimum, a student must attend at least 80 percent of class meetings to receive credit for a course unless the student's absence is excused under university policies. Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family, and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid written excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

D. Credits and Grading

You will receive two credits for the successful completion of this course. Your grade will be based on the following:

Assignment	Points
Open Memo	300
Preliminary Source List	10
Memo 1	10
Memo 2	10
Core Grammar Assignments	24
Peer reviews	16
Professionalism	20
Library Assignments (2)	10
Total	400

The total points earned will be converted into a final grade that will reflect the curve required by the Academic Rules, Policies, and Procedures for the J.D. Program.

<https://law.fsu.edu/academic-rules-policies-and-procedures-jd-program>

Please see the separate "Assignments Syllabus" for daily readings and due dates for all the above assignments.

Professionalism

Professionalism includes being punctual, being prepared, bringing the correct materials and books to class, paying attention, following instructions, participating in class, and behaving in a

mature, courteous manner toward everyone at the law school. Part of your professionalism grade also includes communicating with me if you miss a class.

Late Assignments

Each assignment must be submitted on or before the due date/time. Assignments submitted after the deadline will lower your professionalism grade, and assignments submitted more than 72 hours after the initial deadline will not be accepted. For the open memo, a five percent deduction of the assignment's maximum value will be imposed during the first 60 minutes after the assignment is due. Thereafter, for each additional 24-hour period, an additional five percent deduction will be imposed. Each weekend day or holiday will count as an additional late day for this purpose. Open memos that are more than 72 hours late will receive a score of "0." Computer trouble is not an excuse for late submission. If the open memo is late and you feel you have a good reason for not submitting it on time, you should communicate that reason to a faculty support assistant either in person or by calling (850) 644-4010. Do not e-mail the late open memo or reveal your identity in submitting late work.

E. Academic Honor Policy

Cheating, plagiarism, or any dishonesty in your work is not tolerated at this university. Please refer to your student handbook for more information about FSU's academic honor system and come see me if any part of the code is unclear.

The College of Law's Student Conduct Code (Section 17)

http://www.law.fsu.edu/docs/defaultsource/academic_rules/academic_rules_policies.pdf?sfvrsn=12 governs the academic conduct of students at the Florida State University College of Law. Students are bound by the College of Law's Code in all of their academic work. The Code outlines the College of Law's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process.

In addition, the Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to ". . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at (<http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy>))

Human Intelligence Use Policy

You are encouraged to brainstorm and collaborate orally with me, the teaching assistants assigned to our class, and your Legal Writing and Research classmates.

We have teaching assistants helping with our course. Each TA will hold weekly office hours; they are also available to respond to questions via email. Our TAs can discuss your assignments with you and can read a sentence or two to that end, but they will not review your work before you turn it in.

You are encouraged to meet with the writing specialist, Professor Cecelia Smith, for assistance with grammar and punctuation, although she can review your Open Memo only after it is due. Her e-mail is: csmith@law.fsu.edu.

It is an Honor Policy violation to receive assistance in any form from anyone else including, but not limited to: acquaintances, family members, attorneys; faculty members (including other legal writing professors); roommates, friends, or other law students (except as noted above).

The purpose of these restrictions is to level the playing field, so that you and your Legal Writing and Research classmates all have access to the same resources.

Artificial Intelligence Use Policy

You are not required to use artificial intelligence tools in this class. In fact, if you do not verify what these tools provide you and/or if you do not ensure your final work product meets the standards of this class and demonstrates what we cover in class—then these tools will probably hurt your grades more than help them. Should you use AI, the following parameters will apply.

- Original Content: You must create all assignments. Researching, drafting, editing, and polishing real content from scratch nurtures your critical thinking, analytical, and articulation abilities fundamental to legal work.
- Basic understanding: You may use AI tools to gain a preliminary, basic understanding of complex legal language and terminology.
- Polishing and Proofreading: You may use AI tools to assist with polishing your near-final draft.
- All other uses of AI violate the Honor Policy.

Accountability:

- Students should not lean on AI as a safety net or use it to justify any mistakes. You are responsible for the quality and accuracy of all content, irrespective of AI assistance at any stage.
- Embrace AI as a supportive tool to enhance your skills rather than an easy way out of hard work. Remember, technology is the tool; you are the craftsman.

- It is your responsibility to ensure that any technology-produced aspect of your writing does not infringe copyrighted material, does not plagiarize others, and meets the requirements of the assignment.

F. Statement for Courses Not Subject to HB233 Recording

In this class, consistent with state law and university policy, you may not make recordings of classroom activities without the permission of the professor. This policy applies to both audio and video recordings.

G. Americans with Disabilities Act

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to Nancy Benavides, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, indicating the need for accommodations and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact Dean Benavides.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center
874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
sdrc@admin.fsu.edu
<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

H. Academic Success

Your academic success is a top priority for Florida State University. University resources to help you succeed include tutoring centers, computer labs, counseling and health services, and services for designated groups, such as veterans and students with disabilities. The following information is not exhaustive, so please check with your advisor or the Department of Student Support and Transitions to learn more.

I. Confidential Campus Resources

Various centers and programs are available to assist students with navigating stressors that might impact academic success. These include the following:

Victim Advocate Program

University Center A, Rm. 4100

(850) 644-7161

Available 24/7/365

Office Hours: M-F 8-5

<https://dsst.fsu.edu/vap>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Florida State University's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) primary mission is to address psychological needs and personal concerns, which may interfere with students' academic progress, social development, and emotional well-being. The following in-person and virtual (tele-mental health) services are available to all enrolled students residing in the state of Florida:

1. Individual therapy
 2. Group therapy
 3. Crisis Intervention
 4. Psychoeducational and outreach programming
 5. After hours crisis-hotline
 6. Access to community providers for specialized treatment
- Call 850-644-TALK (8255) for more information on how to initiate services.

Counseling and Psychological Services

250 Askew Student Life Center

942 Learning Way

(850) 644-TALK (8255)

Walk-in and Appointment Hours:

M-F 8 am – 4 pm

<https://counseling.fsu.edu/>

Services at UHS are available to all enrolled students residing in Florida:

The mission of University Health Services (UHS) is to promote and improve the overall health and well-being of FSU students. UHS provides a coordinated continuum of care through prevention, intervention, and treatment. Services include general medical care, priority care, gynecological services, physicals, allergy injection clinic, immunizations, diagnostic imaging, physical therapy, and a medical response unit. The Center for Health Advocacy and Wellness (CHAW) assists students in their academic success through individual, group, and population-based health and wellness initiatives. Topics include wellness, alcohol and other drugs, hazing prevention, nutrition and body image, sexual health, and power based personal violence prevention. For more information, go to uhs.fsu.edu.

University Health Services
Health and Wellness Center
960 Learning Way
Tallahassee, FL 32306
Hours: M-F, 8 am – 4 pm
(850) 644-6230
<https://uhs.fsu.edu/>

J. Syllabus Change Policy

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the grading statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.