

Hagerstown Community College
MASTER SYLLABUS DOCUMENT

COURSE: PLS 101-01, Introduction to Paralegal Studies, 3 credits

INSTRUCTOR: Andrew B. Kramer, M.A., J.D. **SEMESTER/YEAR:** FALL 2016

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFO:

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As this is an online class, I expect that will want to reach me personally. Do so! I welcome the chance to speak with you personally as often as possible. Don't forget that!

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course helps students develop a basic knowledge of the paralegal profession. Topics include: the role of the paralegal in the law office team; the American court system; the American legislative system; researching and interpreting the law; interviewing and investigation; and several areas of specialized study in both civil and criminal law and procedure. This course also stresses ethics as well as attitudes, skills and behaviors required in a professional setting.

TEXTBOOK: Introduction to the Law, 6th Edition by Beth Walston-Dunham

GENERAL NOTE: Remember, this is a fully online course. You will not be meeting me on campus for class. Therefore, it will be important for you to keep with the reading, take notes, submit your assignments and participate in the discussion boards. I will also ask that you come to see me at least twice during the semester to discuss your progress, issues and questions.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: This course will assist the student to:

- *demonstrate knowledge of terms and facts of this subject
- *apply basic knowledge to new situations
- *solve problems
- *communicate solutions
- *demonstrate professional and ethical behavior

Total Hours of Coursework:

To earn one academic credit at HCC, students are required to complete a minimum of 37.5 clock hours (45 fifty-minute "academic" hours) of coursework per semester. Those hours of coursework may be completed through a combination of hours of both online work, reading, discussions, assignments and personal meetings with me.

COURSE CONTENT OBJECTIVES: This course will assist the student to:

- Distinguish between different careers in the legal field as well as different sources of employment
- Use forms such as time sheets, cost vouchers, tickler forms, etc. used in the day-to-day operation of an office
- Explain the legal system which includes the Constitution, the court system, the legislative system and administrative agencies
- Discuss the basic process of acquiring real estate
- Analyze the different ways of doing business
- Explain the basic components of a last will and testament and the process of probating an estate
- Discuss both substantive and procedural aspects of civil law
- Discuss both substantive and procedural aspects of criminal law

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES and POINT TOTALS:

1. **QUIZZES: 100 Points.** There will be 2 announced quizzes, each worth 50 points. The exams will have a variety of types of questions: true and false, multiple choice, short answer and essays. The questions on the exam will be **representative** of the material covered; in other words, there will be a few questions from each chapter. The exams will represent 300 points for the class. You are expected to take the exams on the week they are scheduled. The exams are available online. You may create Word documents and send the completed quiz to my email address.

2. **ASSIGNMENTS: 120 Points.** I will give assignments throughout the semester. For example, students will be required to draft certain documents. You should forward the work by e mail. All work must be done on the computer unless otherwise stated. There will be four graded assignments, each worth 30 points, so these assignments will represent 120 points for the class. You will be provided the rubric for each assignment in advance.

3. **FINAL PORTFOLIO: 100 Points.** Students are expected to maintain a portfolio of these assignments which will be reviewed at the end of the course. The purpose of the portfolio is to assist in assessing what you have learned in this class. The portfolio is due the **last day of classes** for review. It may be a folder that you forward to me by email. Please ensure to organize your portfolio according to subject area, issue or type of document. The Portfolio is worth 100 points.

4. **WEEKLY DISCUSSION BOARDS: 280 Points.** Each week (14), there will be a topic on the Discussion Board. You must submit both an initial post of at least 150 words and also reply to at least 2 of your classmates' posts. Each weekly Discussion Board will be worth 20 pts. of your grade.

5. **PROFESSIONALISM: 100 Points:** This part of your grade is based on professional behavior and attitudes. In other words, you should display the same professionalism for a class that you would for your work. One part is your overall engagement in the class. As an online class, attendance and participation are not graded in a traditional way. However, your overall willingness to respond, discuss and engage the material will be considered. Additionally, your courtesy and use of professional language and proper terminology will also be considered. Other factors include

turning in work on time, doing your own work and showing courtesy to the professor and your classmates.

6. FINAL EXAM: 100 Points

TOTAL POINTS: 800

COURSE POLICIES: In order to make things run smoothly I ask that you honor the following:

1. You are expected to take the announced tests on the day they are scheduled. If there is a sufficient reason to miss the exam, such as a business trip or an illness, please let me know before the exam. All tests, quizzes, etc. must be completed by the last day of classes and not during finals week.
2. Don't assume you are withdrawing from class by not completing assignments or participating. You must follow college policies and procedures. Consult the HCC catalog for the last day to withdraw.
3. We will discuss current events so it will be helpful if you read or watch the news.
4. The instructor has the right to modify the course content and/or the evaluation (testing) and grading procedures as deemed necessary.
5. All work in this class is done under the HCC Academic Integrity Policy. As much of your work will be done out of my presence, special attention will be paid to concerns of plagiarism or use of other sources on quizzes, etc. **Be careful!**
6. I have posted rough outlines of the chapters on Moodle. These are intended to indicate the material covered in a very general way and should not be considered a comprehensive set of notes. They serve as a note-taking guide as well as a study guide.

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: Students may receive reasonable accommodations if they have a diagnosed disability and present appropriate documentation. Students seeking accommodations are required to contact the Disability Support Services (DSS) office as early as possible. Students may contact a DSS staff member for an appointment at dss@hagerstowncc.edu or at 240-500-2530.