Administrative Unit: Criminal Justice Administration & Human Services Department

Course Prefix and Number: CJAD 425

Course Title: Legal Research and Writing

Number of: Credit Hours: 3  Lecture Hours: 3  Laboratory Hours: 0

Catalog Description: Application of systems and methods of legal research to problems and issues in the Justice system. Prerequisite: Junior standing.

Prerequisite(s)/Corequisite(s): Junior standing.

Text(s): Many suitable textbooks are available from various publishers and the following list is not comprehensive. Other textbooks may be judged by individual instructors to be more suitable in meeting Course Objectives. Many current textbooks have companion websites, and the instructor is encouraged to enhance the course experience for the student by utilizing available technology.


The instructor may also want to consider directing the student to websites containing Criminal Codes and Criminal Cases, such as http://www.findlaw.com or other legal sites maintained by governmental or not for profit entities.

Course Objectives:

- To understand the American legal system and the role of attorneys and related professionals in participating in the system.
- To gain experience with common legal terminology and methods employed in researching legal issues.
- To survey traditional and modern methods of conducting legal research.
- To conduct legal research and to interpret and apply research to real and hypothetical problems.
- To demonstrate critical thinking, research and writing skills on legal issues.
Measurable Learning Outcomes:

- Identify the sources of law in the American legal system.
- Describe the traditional methods of performing legal research.
- Describe the various online and electronic methods of performing legal research.
- Explain the differences between primary and secondary legal authorities and research.
- Apply relevant systems and methods of legal research to problems and issues in the justice system.
- Analyze and interpret judicial opinions on relevant issues.
- Interpret and apply the meaning of specific statutory sections to assorted factual situations.
- Identify common legal terminology employed by professionals in the justice system.
- Describe the role of paraprofessionals such as legal assistants and investigators in the justice system.
- Explain the ethical standards governing paraprofessionals performing research and other services for participants in the justice system.
- Compare and evaluate the various sources and methods of legal research.
- Appraise current literature, materials and developments on course related issues.

Topical Outline (major areas of coverage):

- Overview of the Legal system
- Description of the Sources of American law
- The Building Blocks for Legal Research
- Primary Legal Authorities and Related Research Tools
- Secondary Legal Authorities and Related Research Tools
- The Evolution of Legal Research from traditional to modern
- Ethics and legal research
- Sample problems and research strategies

Recommended maximum class size for this course: 20

Library Resources: Online databases are available at http://www.ccis.edu/offices/library/resources.asp. You may access them from off-campus using your eServices login and password when prompted.

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Date: May 15, 2005

NOTE: The intention of the master syllabus is to provide an outline of the contents of this course, as specified by the faculty of Columbia College, regardless of who teaches the course, when it is taught or where it is taught. Faculty members teaching this course for Columbia College are expected to facilitate learning pursuant to the course objectives and cover the subjects listed in the topical outline. However, instructors are also encouraged to cover additional topics of interest so long as those topics are relevant to the course’s subject. The master syllabus is, therefore, prescriptive in nature but also allows for a diversity of individual approaches to course material.