

NOVA COLLEGE-WIDE COURSE CONTENT SUMMARY LGL 125 - LEGAL RESEARCH (3 CR.)

Course Description

Provides an understanding of the various components of a law library and emphasizes research skills through the use of digests, encyclopedias, reporter systems, codes, citations, American Law Reports, and other research tools. May include research through electronic database, overviews of computer applications and writing projects. Lecture 3 hours per week.

General Course Purpose

This course is designed to acquaint the student with various traditional and computer assisted legal research materials and to enable the student to perform legal research effectively and efficiently.

General Course Purpose

Proficiency (at the high school level) in spoken and written English is recommended for successful completion of this course. Corequisite: LGL 110 for students in the paralegal studies program.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to

- describe the purpose of doing legal research and the role research plays in the practice of law.
- rank various types of primary and secondary authorities in terms of relative persuasive weight, and decide which authorities to consult to solve a given research problem.
- analyze a research problem by isolating issues and develop a strategy (through use of descriptive words or known authorities) for solving the problem.
- formulate appropriate search terms and use appropriate search engines and web sites to find relevant law using internet resources.
- choose appropriate data bases and formulate appropriate search terms to find relevant law using westlaw.
- find relevant law using manual research tools, including digests, reporters, annotated codes, and annotated secondary sources.
- describe the importance of updating the law, and update research results using pocket parts, keycite, and advance sheets.
- integrate the skills acquired in the course to solve legal research problems posing constitutional, statutory, caselaw and regulatory issues.
- describe the legal and ethical responsibilities of researchers and report research results accurately and ethically.

Major Topics to Be Included

- sources of law
- primary v. secondary authority and mandatory v. persuasive authority
- problem analysis and issue spotting
- acquiring background through legal dictionaries and encyclopedias
- finding caselaw manually, through official and unofficial reporters, West digests, the West topic and key number system, and American Law Reports.
- finding caselaw on the Internet.
- finding statutes and Constitutional provisions, using annotated codes.
- finding statutes on the Internet.
- finding regulations in the codes of federal regulations, in state administrative bulletins, and on the Internet.
- using Westlaw to find and update legal materials

Extra Topics Which May Be Included

- Restatements of the Law
- treatises and hornbooks
- loose-leaf services, periodicals and practice aids.