

Community College of Rhode Island  
Criminal Justice & Legal Studies Department

# Introduction to Paralegal Studies

## On-Campus Course Syllabus

(Web-Enhanced through Blackboard)

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TEXT: Introduction to Paralegal Studies  
By Daniel J. Donovan, J.D.  
First Edition with 2008 Revisions

### Course Summary

This course (Laws 1080) is an introductory course for Paralegal studies majors and other students who may be interested in finding out about the paralegal field. The course is in three parts: (1) information about lawyers and paralegals and the work that is done in law offices; (2) an overview of the American legal system and the sources of law; and (3) an introduction to computers and their use in the law office. An emphasis throughout the course will be on the use of the Internet for accessing legal resource materials and information.

There are several objectives for this course corresponding to the three parts mentioned above. The first objective is to give students information about the legal profession, the organization of law offices, and about the paralegal field itself, exposing the students to various different fields of the law and the types of work that paralegals/legal assistants will be performing. The second objective is to establish a foundation of knowledge about the legal system for other courses that Paralegal Studies majors will be taking, especially Basic Civil Procedure (Laws 2020) and Legal Research and Writing (Laws 2090). The third objective is to expose students to the types of computer software that is being used in law offices today to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the law office's work. It is imperative that Paralegals are competent in the use of computers to make it in the legal working world.

**Organization of the Course:** The course is divided into five units comprising one or two chapters in each unit. There will be an online multiple choice test given during the semester for each of the first four units. There is also a written assignment required for the first four of the course units. All tests and assignments must be completed to receive a grade for the course.

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## Course Reading Assignments

(Please Note: chapters are not covered in order of the book)

Unit I:		
Chapter Five:	Lawyers & The Legal Profession.....	81
Chapter Six:	Paralegals & The Legal Profession. ....	89
Unit II:		
Chapter One:	Overview of the American Legal System. ....	1
Unit III:		
Chapter Two:	Constitutional Law.....	19
Unit IV:		
Chapter Three:	Legislatures & Statutory Law.....	51
Chapter Four:	Court Structure & Court Decisions. ....	65
Unit V:		
Chapter Seven:	Using Computers in a Law Office. ....	105
Chapter Eight:	Using the Internet in a Law Office.....	113

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**Course Information and Requirements**

**Blackboard Learn:** We will be using a learning management system called Blackboard Learn as a supplement for this course. You will take your tests and submit your assignments through Blackboard. There is a website on Blackboard for this course, which has an e-mail system, a discussion board, video tutors, audio lecture files, tests, and an assignment submission component. You will receive instructions for using Blackboard at the beginning of the semester.

**Grading Policies:** The final grade will be determined based upon the following:

Unit Tests: Four online tests (first four units) worth 75 points each - 300 points

Four written assignments worth 50 points each - 200 points

Total Possible Points (divide by 5 for grade average) = 500 points

Beginning with the Fall 2009 semester, CCRI is using a Plus/Minus Grading System as set out in the college's catalog.

Points Deducted for being late on tests and assignments: Tests are open for a one week period and assignments are open for a two week period. Students are expected to take a test or complete the assignment within the time period assigned. A student will be allowed to take a test after the assigned period or submit an assignment late, but 10 points will be deducted from the student's score on that test or assignment unless there is a valid excuse submitted for not taking the test on time or submitting the assignment on time..

About the Instructor: Professor Daniel J. Donovan holds a law degree (Juris Doctor) from Rutgers Law School in New Jersey. Prior to law school, he received a degree in political science from Villanova University in Pennsylvania. He was involved in continuing legal education for lawyers for 12 years and authored several books and pamphlets for lawyers including "Title Searching in Rhode Island" and "R.I. Landlord & Tenant Law". Your instructor has taught at CCRI full time since 1989 teaching business law, paralegal studies, and law enforcement courses, and had previously taught part-time at CCRI and other colleges. Your instructor is the author of five textbooks: Legal Research in Rhode Island, Survey of the Law of Property & Estates, Civil Procedure for R.I. Paralegals, Survey of RI Law of Torts, and Introduction to Paralegal Studies.