

Community College of Rhode Island
Criminal Justice & Legal Studies Department

Introduction to Paralegal Studies

Course Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Daniel J. Donovan
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TEXT: Introduction to Paralegal Studies
By Daniel J. Donovan, J.D.
First Edition 2001

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.

There will be three multiple choice tests given during the semester, plus two extra credit written assignments. The written assignments will be designed to get the student to explore the different areas of the law that paralegals may work in, so the student can identify the area or areas that might personally interest him or her and to have the student explore their own goals, strengths, and weaknesses in entering the paralegal field.

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Course Reading Assignments

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

Chapter Five:	Lawyers & The Legal Profession.....	81
Chapter Six:	Paralegals & The Legal Profession.	89
Chapter One:	Overview of the American Legal System.	1
Chapter Two:	Constitutional Law.....	19
Chapter Three:	Legislatures & Statutory Law.....	51
Chapter Four:	Court Structure & Court Decisions.	65
Chapter Seven:	Using Computers in a Law Office.	105
Chapter Eight:	Using the Internet in a Law Office.....	117
Chapter Nine:	Computer-Assisted Legal Research.....	125

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Course Information and Requirements

Course Testing: There will be three multiple choice tests given during the semester, and all three tests must be taken to complete the course. If all three tests are not taken, the student will receive a withdrawal for the course, unless the student has a valid excuse for not completing the tests and arranges with the instructor for an incomplete grade.

Make-Up Tests: Make-up tests will be given for those who have missed a scheduled test. The make-up test must be taken within one week of the scheduled test unless a medical excuse is provided. If a make-up test is not taken at that time, a full grade will be deducted from the student's score on that test. No student will be allowed to take more than one make-up test a semester unless the student has a medical excuse or a family emergency proven to the instructor. If a student misses a second scheduled test without a valid reason, one full grade will be deducted from the student's score on that test.

Grading Policy: For this course, an average on the tests of 90 and above will be an "A"; 80 to 89 a "B"; 70 to 79 a "C", and 60 to 69 a "D". A grade average below "60" is a failing grade. Each of the three tests will count for one-third of the final course grade.

Attendance Policy & Grading: The instructor will take attendance for all class sessions. Attendance will be used in grading in two ways. First, if a student's grade is borderline between two grade levels, a good attendance record in that case would result in the student receiving the higher of the two grades. Second, any student who misses more than three weeks worth of the scheduled class sessions will have their final grade for the course reduced by one full grade level (for example from a "B" to a "C"), and any student who misses more than five weeks worth of the scheduled class sessions will receive a withdrawal for the course. Each evening class session, which meets only once a week, will be counted as two classes. If a student leaves an evening class after a break, this will be counted as one absence.

Voice Mail & E-Mail: If a student needs to get in touch with the instructor, he or she may leave a voice mail message at 825-2315 at the Warwick Campus of CCRI. The instructor's office is in Room 3081 at the CCRI Warwick Campus. The instructor's e-mail address is: ddonovan@ccri.edu. Use of e-mail is encouraged as it is easier for the instructor to respond to questions or requests at any time.

Classroom Behavior: It is the responsibility of the instructor to protect the learning environment in the classroom from disruptive behavior for the benefit of all of the students in the class. Examples of disruptive behavior include: sleeping in class, talking between students or passing notes, excessive or chronic lateness, grandstanding, use of pagers, cell phones, or beepers (which shall be turned off or set on vibrate during class), verbal or physical threats, and derogatory language. The instructor reserves the right to ask a student to leave class due to disruptive behavior, eject a student from the course, or mark down a student's grade as may be appropriate for the circumstances in the sole discretion of the instructor.

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 admitted to practice as a lawyer in Rhode Island in 1972. 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.