

PL101

Introduction to Paralegal Studies

[Onsite]

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the American legal system, the role of courts, lawyers and the roles and responsibilities of the paralegal/legal assistant. This course reviews legal terms and office procedures and practice.

Prerequisite(s) and/or Corequisite(s):

None.

Credit hours: 4

Contact hours: 40 (40 Theory Hours)

Syllabus: Introduction to Paralegal Studies

Instructor:	_____
Office hours:	_____
Class hours:	_____

Major Instructional Areas

1. The paralegal profession and workplace
2. Technology and critical skills for the paralegal
3. Ethics, regulation, and professional responsibility
4. Sources of American law
5. The court system
6. Civil litigation and alternative dispute resolution (ADR)
7. Administrative law
8. Interviewing and investigation skills
9. Traditional and computer-assisted legal research
10. Legal writing and critical legal thinking

Course Objectives

1. Summarize the responsibilities assumed by paralegals in law firms, corporations, and government environments.
2. Illustrate necessary paralegal skills and educational requirements.
3. Describe the benefits of professional associations to the paralegal professional.
4. Identify regulatory issues with the paralegal profession.
5. Analyze ethical issues encountered within the paralegal profession.

6. Describe the evolution of American law.
7. Describe the structure of the federal and state court systems.
8. Summarize the types of alternative dispute resolutions (ADR).
9. Explain the civil litigation process.
10. Differentiate the authority and functioning of administrative agencies.
11. Prepare for a client/witness interview.
12. Draft a legal research plan.
13. Relate the characteristics of legal writing and critical legal thinking.

SCANS Objectives

SCANS is an acronym for Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills. The committee, created by the National Secretary of Labor in the early 1990s, created a list of skills and competencies that the committee feels are necessary for employees to function in a high-tech job market.

1. Locates, understands, and interprets written information in various legal documents
2. Communicates thoughts, ideas, information, and messages in writing
3. Creates documents such as letters, memos, and briefs
4. Generates new ideas
5. Acquires, evaluates, organizes, and maintains information
6. Interprets and communicates information
7. Discovers a rule or principle underlying the relationships between two or more issues and applies it when solving a problem
8. Chooses ethical courses of action
9. Chooses procedures and tools including computers and related technologies

Course Outline

Note: All graded activities, except the Paralegal Student Portfolio, are listed below in the pattern of <Unit Number>.<Assignment Number>. For example, Writing Assignments 5.1 refers to the 1st writing activity in Unit 5.

Unit	Activities
1— The Paralegal Profession and Workplace	Content Covered: <i>The Paralegal Professional Essentials:</i> Chapter 1, “The Paralegal Profession,” pp. 3-8, through section titled “Opportunities for Paralegals” Chapter 3, “The Paralegal Workplace,” pp. 75-94
2— Education, Skills, and Associations	Read from <i>The Paralegal Professional Essentials:</i> Chapter 1, “The Paralegal Profession,” pp. 8-31, start at section titled “Career Planning” Chapter 3, “The Paralegal Workplace,” pp. 108-114 Chapter 4, “Technology and the Paralegal” Paralegal Student Portfolio: Start
3— Ethical Issues	Read from <i>The Paralegal Professional Essentials:</i> Chapter 2, “Ethics, Regulation, and Professional Responsibility” Chapter 3, “The Paralegal Workplace,” pp. 95-107 Appendix B, “Model Rules of Professional Conduct” Appendix C, “National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc.: Model Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility and Guidelines for Enforcement” Appendix D, “Model Standards and Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistants-Paralegals” Quizzes: 3.1
4— Sources of American Law	Read from <i>The Paralegal Professional Essentials:</i> Chapter 5, “Sources of American Law”

Unit	Activities
	Group Presentations: 4.1 Quizzes: 4.1
5— Structure of the American Court Systems	Read from <i>The Paralegal Professional Essentials</i> : Chapter 6, “The Court System and Alternate Dispute Resolution,” pp. 199-210, through section titled “Jurisdiction of Federal and State Courts” Writing Assignments: 5.1 Paralegal Student Portfolio: Submit (Draft)
6— Civil Litigation and Alternative Dispute Resolution	Read from <i>The Paralegal Professional Essentials</i> : Chapter 6, “The Court System and Alternate Dispute Resolution,” pp. 210-216, starting at section titled “Alternative Dispute Resolution” Chapter 7, “Civil Litigation” Group Presentations: 6.1 Quizzes: 6.1
7— Administrative Law	Read from <i>The Paralegal Professional Essentials</i> : Chapter 8, “Administrative Law”
8— Interviewing Clients and Witnesses and Investigation Skills	Read from <i>The Paralegal Professional Essentials</i> : Chapter 9, “Interviewing and Investigation Skills” Writing Assignments: 8.1 Quizzes: 8.1
9— Legal Research	Read from <i>The Paralegal Professional Essentials</i> : Chapter 10, “Traditional Computer and Internet Legal Research” Research Assignments: 9.1
10— Legal Writing and Critical Legal Thinking	Read from <i>The Paralegal Professional Essentials</i> : Chapter 11, “Legal Writing and Critical Legal Thinking”

Unit	Activities
	Writing Assignments: 10.1 Paralegal Student Portfolio: Submit (Final)
11– Course Review and Final Exam	Final Exam

Instructional Methods

The Introduction to Paralegal Studies course is designed to promote a variety of teaching strategies that support the outcomes described in the course objectives and that foster higher cognitive skills. Delivery makes use of various methods and media including lectures, classroom participation, and video vignettes for discussion and analysis of relevant, real-world paralegal situations.

This course will also introduce you to the concept of creating a paralegal student portfolio. The first element included in the portfolio will be a resumé, which you will develop during this introductory course. You should refine your resumé as you progress through the Paralegal program. In addition to the resumé, you will continue to build your portfolio throughout the program, adding and refining additional elements in subsequent courses.

This introductory course includes assessment strategies to help measure your grasp of key concepts. Assessments include writing assignments, a research assignment, group presentations, quizzes, a final exam, and the paralegal student portfolio.

Instructional Materials and References

Student Textbook Package

Cheeseman, Henry R. and Thomas F. Goldman. *The Paralegal Professional Essentials*, 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008.

References

ITT Tech Virtual Library

Log on to the ITT Tech Virtual Library at <http://www.library.itt-tech.edu/> to access online books, journals, and other reference resources selected to support ITT Tech curricula.

Books

You may click “Books” or use the “Search” function on the home page to find the following books.

- Ebrary
 - Camenson, Blythe. *Careers for Legal Eagles & Other Law-and-order Types*, 2nd ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 2005
 - Fins, Alice. *Opportunities in Paralegal Careers*, Revised ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 2005.

Other References

The following resources may be found **outside** of the ITT Tech Virtual Library.

Web sites

- American Bar Association (ABA)

<http://www.aba.net>

This is the official site for the American Bar Association and provides current article links within the ABA Newsroom as well as the *ABA Journal*.

- National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA)

<http://www.paralegals.org>

This site provides information about the Paralegal Advanced Competency Exam (PACE), individual state paralegal regulations, legal research resources, and association membership.

- National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA)

<http://www.nala.org>

This site includes information about paralegal careers, continuing education, the Certified Legal Assistant (CLA), and the Certified Paralegal (CP) exam.

- International Paralegal Management Association (IPMA)

<http://www.paralegalmanagement.org/ipma/>

This site includes legal resources and service providers, job openings, industry reports, and additional links to law-related associations.

- NALS, *the Association for Legal Professionals*

<http://www.nals.org>

This site includes information about NALS and the Professional Paralegal (PP) certification, as well as continuing education and online training resources.

- American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE)

<http://www.aafpe.org>

This site includes information about the AAfPE organization and provides an overview of the paralegal profession, as well as listing upcoming conferences and links to additional allied organizations.

- American Alliance of Paralegals, Inc. (AAPI)

<http://www.aapipara.org>

This site includes information about AAPI's Code of Ethics, paralegal education, certification programs, and links to various legal resources.

- Cornell University Law Library

<http://library.lawschool.cornell.edu>

This site offers electronic legal researches and an extensive online legal research guide.

- Oyez

<http://www.oyez.org>

This site offers access to databases on the major constitutional cases heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

All links to Web references outside of the ITT Tech Virtual Library are always subject to change without prior notice.

Course Evaluation and Grading

Evaluation Criteria Table

The final grades will be based on the following categories:

CATEGORY	WEIGHT
Research Assignments	10%
Group Presentations	10%
Writing Assignments	15%
Student Paralegal Portfolio	15%
Quizzes	25%
Final Exam	25%
Total	100%

Note: Students are responsible for abiding by the Plagiarism Policy.

Grade Conversion Table

The final grades will be calculated from the percentages earned in the course, as follows:

A	90-100%	4.0
B+	85-89%	3.5
B	80-84%	3.0
C+	75-79%	2.5

C	70-74%	2.0
D+	65-69%	1.5
D	60-64%	1.0
F	<60%	0.0

(End of Syllabus)