SYLLABUS
U.S. LEGAL RESEARCH ANALYSIS & WRITING

Course Description and Purpose
Students will study the operation of the Common Law in the U.S. legal system by analyzing significant legal opinions that have constituted important exercise of judicial power. Students will have the opportunity to observe how the approaches, forms, and conventions prevalent in U.S. law are used to conduct legal analysis and advocacy. Writing assignments give students the opportunity to practice using those tools. Students will be introduced to U.S. legal resources, research methods, and analytical processes. Students will prepare written work product in the form of a legal memorandum and a judicial opinion to develop their understanding of common law reasoning. Students will also give oral presentations explaining their reasoning and conclusions. Students will receive individual feedback on both written and oral work.

Course No.: LAWG-844-16
Total Credits: 2 credit hours
Instructor: Mark A. Walsh, Esq.

Semester: Spring 2015
Day and Time: Mondays 9:00 am - 11:00 am
Classroom: Hotung 5027
Textbook: United States Legal Discourse: Legal English for Foreign LLMs (by Craig Hoffman, Andrea Tyler)

Class Attendance: The class is conducted consistent with the 2015-2016 Georgetown Law Student Handbook of Academic Policies. Regular and punctual attendance is required of each student. Students will be asked to sign in at every class. Students will be excused from attending class with advance approval, which will require a statement of the need for the absence and the student’s plan to obtain and review the class subject matter.

Grade: Your final grade will be based on the quality of legal analysis presented in written work product (90%), and the quality and organization of legal writing (20%), with extra credit available for class participation. Violation of the University’s plagiarism policy will result in a proportional reduction of the overall grade and may result in a failing grade.

Office Hours I will be available for office hours as needed immediately following each class and at other times in person or by telephone by advance appointment.
Week 1   January 25, 2015   Welcome & Course Overview

Reading Assignment:
Textbook: Chapter 1, Introduction (pp. 1-9)
GULC Plagiarism Policy

Discussion Topic:
Course objectives and requirements
Citation of Authority and Plagiarism
Writing Assignments and Grading

Week 2   February 1, 2015   Common Law Reasoning

Reading Assignment:
Textbook: Chapters 2.8 (pp. 16-23) and 2.10 (pp. 24-25)

Discussion Topic:
The Common Law Rubric and sources of Authority

Week 3   February 8, 2015   Writing Assignments & Grading

Reading Assignment:

Discussion Topic: Assignment Topics

Week 4   February 18, 2015   Legal Authority

Reading Assignment:


Discussion Topic:
Identifying Authorities and measuring their weight.
Analysis of Procedural History

Week 5   February 22, 2015   The Role of Judicial Opinions

Reading Assignment:


Textbook: Chapters 4.1 - 4.3 (pp. 38-40)

Discussion Topic:
Understanding the Judge’s role and perspective
Application of the Common Law Rubric
Week 6 February 29, 2015 Analyzing Judicial Opinions

Reading Assignment:


Textbook: Chapter 4.4 (pp. 40-49)

Discussion Topic:

Week 7 March 14, 2015 Legal Memoranda

Reading Assignment:

Textbook: Chapter 5.4 (pp. 54-63)

Discussion Topic:

Analyzing legal memoranda

Week 8 March 21, 2015 Federalism and State Power

Reading Assignment:

*Erie Railroad Co. v. Tompkins*, 304 U.S. 64, 58 S.Ct. 817, 82 L.Ed. 1188 (1938)

Discussion Topic:

The relationship between state and federal law

Week 9 March 28, 2015 Final Papers & Grading

Reading Assignment: Materials will be distributed in Week __

Discussion Topic: Final Paper Topic

Week 10 April 4, 2015 Federalism and State Power

Reading Assignment:

*Erie Railroad Co. v. Tompkins*, 304 U.S. 64, 58 S.Ct. 817, 82 L.Ed. 1188 (1938)

Discussion Topic:

The relationship between state and federal courts.

Week 11 April 11, 2015 Federalism and Separation of Powers

Reading Assignment:


Discussion Topic:

The separation of powers and the scope of Congressional authority.
Week 12    April 18, 2015    Federalism and Separation of Powers

Reading Assignment:


Discussion Topic:

The separation of powers and the scope of the Executive’s authority

Week 13    April 25, 2015    Course Review & Final Papers

Discussion Topic:

A review and discussion of the course content and its use in the final paper.