

The American Legal System

PLS 205 - 3 credits

Doane College – Spring Term

March 19, 2008 to May 14, 2008

Description:

A comprehensive study of the nature of the judiciary and the court system and the major function the law serves in modern society. Students will learn (1) the general structure of the U.S. legal system at the federal, state, and local levels; (2) the roles of the various officials involved in the court system; (3) the differences in function and procedure among trial courts, appellate courts, and administrative hearings; (4) the difference between substantive and procedural law; and (5) the difference between criminal and civil law. Special attention will be given to the detailed structure of the state and local courts in Nebraska.

Location & Times:

Doane College, Lincoln
Wednesday, 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm

Instructor:

Jason W. Hayes, Adjunct Professor
Cell phone: (402) 202-5247
E-mail: Jason@Hayes.org

Textbook Materials:

Required: Neal R. Bevans, *Introduction to Law for Paralegals*, Aspen Publishers (2004)
ISBN: 0-7355-4594-4

Course Objectives:

After completing the course instruction, the student should have a heightened awareness of the component parts and processes of the American Legal System. This awareness will be achieved by mastering the following areas contained within the course material:

1. the general structure of the U.S. legal system at the federal, state, and local levels;
2. the roles of various officials involved in the court system;
3. the differences in function and procedure among trial courts, appellate courts, and administrative hearings;
4. the difference between substantive and procedural law; and
5. the difference between criminal and civil law.

As a result of this heightened awareness and knowledge of the component parts of the American legal system, the student should be able to differentiate between the subsystems of the judicial system involved in the commencement and duration of various legal actions.

Assessment of Student Performance and Grading:

Students will be able to obtain a total of 275 points from assignments, discussions and examinations conducted during the course. The breakdown for the number of points that a student will be able to earn are as follows:

Final Examination	150 points
Legal System Assignment	100 points
Participation in Class	25 points

Summary of Examinations and Assignments:

Final Examination: The exam will consist of essays and short answer questions that will cover the entire content of the course. The exam will be a take home test.

Legal System Assignment: The student will choose a topic and write a paper regarding the American legal system that he or she finds of interest. The topic should encompass an area of law regarding either substantive or procedural content, and should include case law and statutory materials as reference sources. (Paper should be no greater than 6 pages).

Course Policies:

Attendance:

Student attendance at all class meetings is expected. If a student will be unable to attend a class meeting, it is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor and perform any necessary makeup or additional assignments given to the student by the instructor. Students should obtain class notes from a fellow classmate, and the absent student is responsible for all material covered on the day of the absence. Two or more unexcused absences may result in a failing grade.

Grading Scale:

The grading scale is based on a nine point, A, B, C, D, F plus scale, and is as follows:

A+	100 - 96	A	95 - 90
B+	89 - 85	B	84 - 80
C+	79 - 75	C	74 - 70
D+	69 - 65	D	64 - 60
F	59 - below		

Late Assignments:

Assignments that are turned in late during the duration of the course prior to May 14, 2008 are downgraded by one letter grade. For each additional week the assignment is late, an additional letter grade is reduced off the original score given. All assignments must be completed and handed in by May 14, 2008 to receive any credit.

Academic Integrity: The Doane College Academic Integrity Policy will be adhered to in this class. All projects and tests will represent your own work. Any use of others' ideas and words without proper citation of sources is plagiarism and will result in penalties to be determined by the instructor and/or the dean of undergraduate studies.

Format of Writings: All assignments should be typed, double spaced, with one-inch margins, and using a font no larger than 12 pt. in Times New Roman, Arial or Courier. If you have any questions regarding this requirement please contact your instructor.

Course Schedule and Readings:

March 19	Chapter 1	Introduction to Law
March 26	Chapter 2 Chapter 3 Chapter 4	Researching the Law Participants in the Legal System Bringing a Legal Action
April 2	Chapter 5 Chapter 6 Chapter 7	Ethics Trials Appeals
April 9	Chapter 8 Chapter 9	Personal Injury Law (Torts) Contracts and Business Law
April 16	No Class	
April 23	<i>Legal System Assignment Due</i> Chapter 10 Chapter 11	Criminal Law Administrative Law
April 30	Chapter 12 Chapter 13	Real Property Law Wills and Trusts
May 7	Chapter 14 Chapter 15 <i>Final Exam Handed Out</i>	Family Law Intellectual Property
May 14	<i>Final Exam Due – No Class</i>	