The American Legal System
PLS 205 - 3 credits
Doane College – Summer Term
May 28, 2014 to July 24, 2014

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
Thursday, 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm

Instructor:  Jason W. Hayes, Adjunct Professor
Cell phone:  (402) 304-9414
E-mail:  jason.hayes@doane.edu

Textbook Materials:
Required:  Neal R. Bevans, Introduction to Law for Paralegals, Wolters Kluwer (2nd Ed.

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 300 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: 200 points
- Legal System Assignment: 100 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 July 31, 2014 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 July 31, 2014 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:

May 29  Chapter 1  Introduction to Law  
Chapter 3  The Participants in the Legal System

June 5  Chapter 4  Bringing a Legal Action  
Chapter 5  Ethics  
Pick Legal System Assignment Topic

June 12  No Class

June 19  Chapter 6  Trials  
Chapter 7  Appeals

June 26  Chapter 8  Personal Injury Law (Torts)  
Chapter 9  Contracts and Business Law

July 4  No Class

July 10  Chapter 10  Criminal Law  
Chapter 12  Real Property Law

July 17  No Class

July 24  Legal System Assignment Due  
Chapter 13  Wills and Trusts  
Chapter 14  Family Law  
Final Exam Handed Out

July 31  Final Exam Due  
No Class