

MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COURSE OUTLINE

LEG 129  
Course Number

Role of the Paralegal  
Course Title

3  
Credits

3  
Class Hours

0  
Lab Hours

Text: Title: West's Paralegal Today: The Essentials  
Authors: Roger LeRoy Miller & Mary Meinzinger Urisko  
Publisher: Thomson/Delmar Learning  
Edition: Third

Catalog Description:

Study of the relationship among paralegals, attorneys, and clients particularly as it relates to law office economics, legal ethics, and confidentiality. Stages in a civil lawsuit and a criminal prosecution are examined; legal interviewing, investigation, and an orientation to legal research are stressed. Fall and spring offering.

Prerequisite: None

Corequisite: None

Eric M. Perkins  
Course Coordinator

Instructor's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Class Time/Room # \_\_\_\_\_  
Office Hours \_\_\_\_\_  
Office #/Phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Jan. 2004

### Method of Evaluation

The course will integrate the theoretical and practical aspects of the role of the paralegal. Three one hour examinations and a final examination will test a wide-range of substantive legal topics. In addition there will be exercises and projects dealing with civil litigation, legal interviewing, legal investigation, and legal research.

### Grading:

3 examinations (hourly) at 25% each	75%
Exercises and projects	<u>25%</u>
	100%

A comprehensive final exam will be used to give the student an opportunity to improve one's course grade.

A--90 to 100%
B--80 to 89%
C--70 to 79%
D--60 to 69%
F--below 60%

### Instructional Methods:

The teaching method employed is a combination of lecture and discussion, supplemented by various exercises, both in and out of class. When appropriate, guest speakers or panel discussions will be utilized.

### Academic Integrity Statement

“A student who a) knowingly represents work of others as his/her own, b) uses or obtains unauthorized assistance in the exception of any academic work, or c) gives fraudulent assistance to another student is guilty of cheating. Violators will be penalized.” (Student Handbook)

### Student Conduct Statement

It is the students' responsibility to attend all of their classes. If they miss a class meeting for any reason, students are responsible for all content that is covered, for announcements made in their absence, and for acquiring any materials that may have been distributed in class. It is expected that students be on time for all their classes. If students walk into a class after it has begun, it is expected that they choose a seat close to where they entered the room so that they do not disrupt the class meeting.

Students are expected to follow ordinary rules of courtesy during class sessions. Engaging in private, side conversations during class time is distracting to other students and to the instructor. Leaving class early without having informed the instructor prior to class is not appropriate. Unless there is an emergency, leaving class and returning while the class is in session is not acceptable behavior. Disruptive behavior of any type, including sharpening pencils during class while someone is speaking, is not appropriate.

The college welcomes all students into an environment that creates a sense of community of pride and respect; we are all here to work cooperatively and to learn together.

### Unit One General Objectives (Exam I Material)

The student will be able to understand the definition of a legal assistant and the economics of paralegalism including private and public sector job descriptions, opportunities, salary ranges and the issues related to the educating and regulation of legal assistants as well as the range of issues related to legal ethics and confidentiality.

### UNIT ONE Specific Objectives

The student will be able to:

Understand the definition of legal assistants by comparing and contrasting the definitions created by The American Bar Association, State of New Jersey, NALA and NFPA.

Discuss the concept of paralegalism including the history of paralegalism.

Compare and contrast the various types of job descriptions, opportunities, entry level requirements, salary ranges and characteristics of public sector and private sector legal assistant positions.

Compare and contrast the major similarities and differences between NALA and NFPA including their CLA and PACE programs.

Be aware of the various local paralegal associations and understand their affiliations with the national associations.

Understand the process of the education of legal assistants and the ABA's role in the program approval and reapproval process.

Compare and contrast the pros and cons of legal assistant certification and licensure.

Analyze and evaluate the relationship between the legal assistant, the attorney and the client including the requirement of confidentiality.

Discuss and evaluate the range of ethical considerations which govern legal assistants including the unethical and unauthorized practice of law.

Analyze and discuss the different forms of law offices and understand various issues and considerations which influence the practice of law.

### UNIT TWO General Objectives (Exam II Material)

The student will be able to understand the various steps and stages in a civil law suit and a criminal prosecution and will be able to analyze and evaluate the role of the legal assistant in a civil lawsuit and a criminal prosecution. The student will also be able to perform various tasks incidental to a civil lawsuit including the preparation of a complaint, answer and interrogatories.

### UNIT TWO Specific Objectives

The student will be able to:

Understand and discuss each of the stages in a civil lawsuit including the complaint, service of process, the answer and other responsive pleadings.

Prepare a complaint based on a specific fact pattern.

Prepare an answer to the complaint.

Evaluate and describe all of the discovery techniques and their effective uses.

Propound a set of interrogatories based on a specific fact pattern.

Understand and evaluate the purpose and process of pretrial motions, arbitration, and settlement conferences.

Evaluate and discuss the nature of a civil trial, appeals and the process of execution on a judgment.

Understand and describe the role of the legal assistant at each stage of a civil lawsuit.

Understand and describe the stages in a criminal prosecution from the arrest, arraignment, preliminary hearing, discovery, pretrial motions, the trial, sentencing, appeals and post conviction relief.

Understand and describe the role of the legal assistant during each of the stages of a criminal prosecution.

### UNIT THREE General Objectives (Exam III Material)

The student will be able to understand the basic principles and techniques of legal interviewing and investigation. The student will also be able to understand basic legal research techniques and conduct research using statutes, reports and various legal formbooks and understand the capabilities of computerized legal research systems such as WESTLAW.

### UNIT THREE Specific Objectives

The student will be able to:

Understand and describe sound interviewing principles and techniques and conduct a legal interview based on a specific factual setting.

Prepare a fact gathering interview questionnaire for use in a mock interview setting.

Conduct a mock interview using a fact gathering questionnaire.

Understand the purpose of a statement and describe the principles of the statement taking process.

Prepare a statement based on an established set of facts.

List and discuss general sources of information available to legal personnel when doing investigative work.

Complete an investigation exercise using various investigative techniques applied to hypothetical fact patterns.

Understand and describe basic legal research terminology.

List and describe various legal research tools for use in New Jersey and federal legal research.

Conduct basic legal research using statutory, caselaw reports and various secondary sources located in the MCCC library.

Observe a WESTLAW demonstration.

Understand and describe the elements of a brief.

Brief a New Jersey Supreme Court or Superior Court case.

Understand the difference between informal and formal advocacy.

List and discuss the elements of a due process administrative hearing.