

Whittier Law School

CLASS POLICIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

COURSE: Introduction to Legal Analysis, 2009-10

TEXTS

REQUIRED: Michael Hunter Schwartz, Expert Learning for Law Students
Ruth Ann McKinney, Reading Like a Lawyer

TEXTS

RECOMMENDED: A legal dictionary

- **Course Objectives:** To assist students in developing the skills necessary to succeed in law school, in practice and on the bar exam—and to make students more effective and successful as law students. More specifically, by the end of the course, successful students will have: (1) developed the learning skills they need to succeed in law school; (2) begun to develop legal-analytical skills, particularly the skills involved in identifying legal issues, understanding and using rules of law, and using and analyzing facts; (3) developed the ability to read and understand court opinions and legal rules, and (4) developed their ability to express ideas and understanding regarding legal issues, both orally and in writing.
- **Course Methodology:** The class **begins during orientation week**, and then meets once per week in small group sections, led by faculty from the Institute for Graduate and Academic Support. Unique features of the course include: (1) multiple opportunities for practice and feedback with respect to the knowledge and skills that are the objectives of the course; (2) exercises designed to help students learn, understand and remember the course materials; (3) substantial emphasis on teaching students the learning, reading and thinking skills they need to succeed in law school, in practice and on the bar exam.
- **Class Participation:** Legal education is a cooperative venture, and lawyers must be able to orally communicate their ideas. Class participation therefore is a mandatory part of this course. Moreover, any student deemed unprepared for class will be treated as absent for that day. Please note, there is a significant difference between being unprepared and being unable to “answer” one of our questions. We expect you to stay sufficiently ahead on your assignments to insure your readiness to participate for each class and group meeting. Neither the assertion that you did not anticipate the class or group getting so far, nor that you read the assignment too long ago to remember it will excuse a failure to be prepared. We will not deem you unprepared simply because you venture an incorrect answer in class (unless, of course, your answer reflects inadequate preparation). You also may be excused from participating

once during the course for any reason of your choosing if you request an excuse **prior to the commencement of class**. Aside from the above-referenced excuse, there is no such thing as an excused failure to be prepared.

- **Course Grading:** Successful completion of this course is a requirement for graduation from the Law School. The course is graded on a pass/fail basis. To pass the course, you must meet the following requirements.

1) **Attend and participate in class.** We will pass around an attendance sheet at the beginning of each class session. If you arrive late, leave during class time or depart early (without prior permission), you will be marked absent for that session. **If you miss more than three class sessions, we will withdraw you from the class.**

(2) **Complete assignments.** For most class sessions you will be preparing homework assignments. The assignments will help you practice the skills on which you will be tested on your law school examinations, and the bar examination. Because the goals of all of these assignments include giving you practice and feedback, you will not be graded on the accuracy of your answers. You will, however, be graded on the extent to which your submissions demonstrate a good faith effort to do the assignments. To pass each assignment you must prepare an answer to each assigned question or exercise and that answer must reflect a genuine effort to successfully complete the assignment. **A failure to turn in an assignment, or a failure to turn in an assignment that reflects a good faith effort will count as an absence.**

- **Course Web Page:** The course has its own web page that includes lists of learning objectives, study guides and quizzes. To get to the course web page, you will need a Westlaw password.
- **Seating Chart: During orientation week you will be given a name card that you should place in front of you during the class sessions.** In the first classroom session following orientation, we will distribute a seating chart at the beginning of the first class. Please print the name (first and last) you wish to be called in the space reflecting the seat you have chosen for the semester. We will drop from the class all students whose names do not appear on the chart.
- **Assignments:** Attached are the reading assignments and class topics. Assignments may be altered or supplemented.
- **Office Hours, Appointments and E-mail:** Students may use office hours to address their concerns regarding any of the course material or for other guidance. Each faculty member will announce his or her office hours, email and other contact information on the first day of regular classes.

NOTE: All reading assignments should be completed prior to coming to class. We suggest that you read chapters 1-8 of the Schwartz text and chapters 1-4 of the McKinney text prior to Orientation.

Week and date	Topic	Pre-class assignment
Orientation Evening 2 (2 hours)	Succeeding in Law School Expert Learning Learning Styles Intro to Legal Analysis	Reading: Schwartz Ch. 1-8; McKinney Ch. 1-4
Orientation Evening 3 (2 hours)	Reading Like a Lawyer Briefing Court Opinions	VARK assessment Reading Speed Assessment Survey Form Reading: McKinney Ch. 5-9, Schwartz pp. 85-122
Classroom Session 1 Tuesday, August 25	Learning in the law school classroom The Socratic Method Note taking Using your laptop wisely Time Management Study Aids A simulated class experience Reflections and Assessment: Evaluating your performance	Reading: Schwartz Ch. 10
Classroom Session 2 Tuesday, September 1	Reading and Briefing revisited-- intro to applying and distinguishing cases; Intro to IRAC	Prepare Oral Argument based on Fisher case (detailed instructions distributed in Class 1); McKinney Ch. 10-12 Schwartz Ch. 15
Classroom Session 3 Tuesday, September 8	Debriefing – TBA (class time will change for this class)	
Classroom Session 4 Tuesday, September 15	The “R” in IRAC—Introduction to Rule Deconstruction	Schwartz 149-158
Classroom Session 5 Tuesday, September 22	The “A” in IRAC—rule/fact application	Schwartz 211-221 Post Class Assignment: Practice Exam #1
Classroom Session 6 Tuesday, September 29	Organizing Course Materials; learning styles revisited	Schwartz 158-172

Classroom Session 7 Tuesday, October 6	More IRAC; using checklists, outlining exams, spotting the issues	Schwartz 205-210
Classroom Session 8 Tuesday, October 13	More “A”—broad and narrow holdings	Broad and Narrow holdings handout; Schwartz 220-228
Classroom Session 9 Tuesday, October 20	Even more “A”—holding/fact application	Exercise 15.3.1 and 15.3.2
Classroom Session 10 Tuesday, October 27	Memorization and Pre-writing	Schwartz Ch. 13; Pre-Writing Handout
Classroom Session 11 Tuesday, November 3	Putting it all together—exam writing workshop	Review Schwartz Ch. 15, Read Ch. 16
Classroom Session 12 Tuesday, November 10	Simulated exam and workshop	
Classroom Session 13 Tuesday, November 17	Multiple choice test taking approaches and strategies	
Classroom Session 14 Tuesday, November 24	Individual Appointments – preparing for finals	