Classes: Students are required and each journal’s notes editors (or their equivalents) are expected to attend five classes. Classes will meet from 6:00 to 7:50 p.m. in Room 121. Students and notes editors must also access this course’s page on TWEN.

1. August 24 Introduction, Topic Selection (very briefly), Preemption Checks & Research Strategies
2. August 31 Outlining, Organization & Structure
3. September 28 Drafting, Style, Tone & Effective Use of Legal Authority
4. October 26 Incorporating Comments, Revising & Editing
5. November 9 More Revising, Editing & Miscellany

Workshops: Students must also attend at least two of five optional workshops. These will also meet from 6:00 to 7:50 p.m. in Room 121 on (1) September 14; (2) September 21; (3) October 5; (4) November 2; and (5) November 16. Students may sign up for workshops on TWEN two weeks prior to each meeting time (e.g., students may sign up for the first workshop beginning August 31). The topics for each of the workshops will be announced at the first class meeting. Space in each workshop will be limited to allow all students to participate in the minimum number of meetings required and to encourage students to sign up sooner rather than later in the semester. Exceptions to this limitation will be made on a case-by-case basis and only in truly exceptional circumstances.

Law Librarian Meeting: Students must e-mail Melanie Knapp, the Law Library’s Head of Reference and Instructional Services, at moberlin@gmu.edu to arrange a meeting with a law librarian before October 12 to discuss their research. As the law librarians’ time is finite and their assistance in most cases is indispensable, students are strongly encouraged to make these arrangements early in the semester.

Office Hours are by appointment only. Always consult with your notes editor and your mentor (where applicable) before requesting an appointment. Then, please e-mail or see me before or after a class or workshop to arrange a time to meet.

Texts: While it is not required that you purchase these books, it is highly recommended that you not only do so but also read them carefully. A limited number of copies of each are on reserve in the Law Library. Citations to articles and other materials that may also be helpful to students (e.g., Strunk & White, The Chicago Manual of Style) will be given in class.


ELIZABETH FAJANS & MARY R. FALK, SCHOLARLY WRITING FOR LAW STUDENTS: SEMINAR PAPERS, LAW REVIEW NOTES AND LAW REVIEW COMPETITION PAPERS (3d ed. 2004).

Submissions: Students must submit all of the following in the format required by their journals on or before their journals’ respective deadlines: (1) topic selection; (2) preemption check; (3) outline; (4) first draft; (5) second draft; and (6) final paper. For those journals whose notes editors will be providing comments on these submissions, those comments must also be submitted by the students when they receive them. Students must also submit a confirmation of their meeting with a Law Librarian stating when they met, with whom, and for how long. Submissions must be sent as a .pdf attachment to scholarlywriting2012@gmail.com. The subject line for each submission e-mail must be formatted as follows: Last Name, First Name – [GMLR, CRLJ, JLEP, JICL, or NAT SEC] – [Submission Type] (e.g., Orwell, George – NAT SEC – Law Librarian Meeting; King, Stephen – GMLR – Outline Comments). Notes editors and mentors must be copied on all submission e-mails. When submissions are required for a workshop, that information will be provided in the workshop’s description on TWEN. Student submissions will often be used as examples in class; however, the authors of submissions used as examples will remain anonymous.

Credit for the course will be awarded based on a combination of several factors. Timely submissions that demonstrate an understanding of the various organizational, structural, stylistic, and analytical concepts that are the substance of this course, including a final paper of “publishable quality,” are the most important factor. Please note that even in cases where a student submits a final paper of publishable quality, otherwise untimely or insufficient submissions or a failure to comply with any of the requirements described above will weigh heavily against awarding credit.