
**ANTONIN SCALIA LAW SCHOOL, GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
LEGAL RESEARCH, WRITING, AND ANALYSIS**

**LRWA I: Introduction to Legal Research, Writing, and Analysis
FALL 2024 SYLLABUS**

LAW 096-all sections (2 credits)

Program Administration

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Ashley Matthews

Reference and Instructional Services Librarian

Hazel Hall, Law Library, Room 143

(703) 993-8604 | amatthe@gmu.edu

Textbooks & Subscriptions

Required texts:

- Christine Coughlin et al., *A Lawyer Writes: A Practical Guide to Legal Analysis* (4th ed. 2024) (“ALW”) (electronic version free through Lexis Study Aids ***though purchase of a hard copy is strongly encouraged***)
- Kent C. Olson et al., *Legal Research in a Nutshell* (15th ed. 2024) (“Nutshell”) (electronic version free through West Academic Study Aids)
- *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (Columbia Law Review Ass’n et al. eds., 21st ed. 2020) (“Bluebook”) (electronic or hard copy)

Required one-year subscription:

- Core Grammar for Lawyers 5th ed. (“Core Grammar”) (follow “Start-Up Instructions” on Canvas)

Recommended resources:

- Richard Wydick & Amy Sloan, *Plain English for Lawyers* (6th ed. 2019) (or any earlier edition) (electronic version free through Lexis Study Aids)

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- Tracy L.M. Norton, *Interactive Citation Workbook for The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation 2024 Edition* (2024) (on reserve in the law library)

Canvas

Log into Canvas and check that you are enrolled in “Fall 2024 Intro to Lgl Res Writ & (LAW-096-001).” Day students have been automatically enrolled. Flex JD students should have received an email invitation to enroll; please accept that invitation.

Course Description

LRWA I is a skills course that focuses on the fundamentals of legal research, writing, analysis, and citation essential for law practice. The writing assignments this semester are predictive in nature. Students learn to use research tools to find the law, to use legal reasoning to analyze the law and solve client problems, and to communicate their findings in written forms expected in the legal profession.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students should be able to do the following:

- Locate primary and secondary authority relevant to a legal problem
- Distinguish between mandatory and persuasive authority
- Read and interpret cases and statutes
- Identify and articulate a rule from a case
- Synthesize a rule from multiple sources
- Apply the law to client facts using rule-based and analogical reasoning
- Write using the basic structure of legal analysis
- Understand the form and content of an office memorandum
- Use basic case citation
- Use grammar, syntax, and tone appropriate for the intended audience and purpose
- Demonstrate professionalism expected in practice

Course Format

All LRWA I sections follow a uniform syllabus, with uniform assignments and deadlines. Most weeks, LRWA I meets in a small group setting led by a full-time or adjunct professor. All sections have at least one Writing Fellow, a third- or fourth-year law student who serves as a teaching assistant and mentor. On research weeks, instruction is led by law librarians.

Assessments and Grading

The course is graded on a curve, and students are evaluated relative to the students in their small section. The chart below summarizes how each assessment contributes to the final grade in the course, followed by a more detailed description of each component.

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Assessment	Weight
Closed Memo	20%
Open Memo	45%
Skills Exercises	15%
Conference drafts & research plan	10%
Preparation, participation, and professionalism	10%

Closed and Open Memos:

The significant writing projects this semester are based on two client files that simulate problems a new attorney might face in practice. For the Closed Memo, all the research needed to answer the client's question will be provided. The Open Memo requires students to conduct their own research to analyze the client's problem. Each memo will require multiple drafts.

The final drafts of the Closed Memo and Open Memo will be anonymously graded, meaning that the professor will not know the identity of the writer when grading. Students must select a different anonymous grading number (AGN) for each memo before the assignment deadline. The final drafts will be graded on a six-point scale, in quarter-point increments. The six-point scale is described in the "LRWA Grading Guide" posted on Canvas. Professors will report the section's high, low, and mean scores for each memo.

On written assignments, whether preliminary or final, students should submit the highest quality work they can, as expected in law practice. Doing so will help the evaluator provide relevant feedback. Students will receive feedback in various forms, including oral and written comments from professors and Writing Fellows and peer comments in the context of structured peer review. Professors will respond as supervising attorneys and teachers, not as editors. A professor may, for instance, correct an error the first time it appears but leave it to the student to correct the error throughout the rest of the paper and in future assignments. Students are expected to integrate readings, exercises, feedback, and classroom instruction to self-edit their work.

Skills Exercises:

Research Exercises: Research exercises will be started under the guidance of law librarians during research classes. Each exercise will be evaluated on a credit/no credit basis. Students will receive credit if they successfully complete the exercise and submit it on Canvas before 11:59 pm on Friday following class.

Interactive Citation Workstation (ICW) Exercises: ICW exercises will help students learn the Bluebook, a uniform legal citation system, and will be completed independently online on Lexis+ (free to students). To get started, log into Lexis+ and navigate to "Interactive Citation Workstation" and select the "Setup" tab. Search for and select "FitzGerald, Suzanne." Next, select your section professor and the click "Save Professor and Class." You should then have access to all the Bluebook exercises, although this semester you need only complete **Bluebook**

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Exercises 1, 2, 3, 5, 12, and 13. Each required exercise will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. To receive credit for an exercise, a student must correctly answer at least 70% of the problems before the deadline and comply with the setup and submission instructions. Students will have three chances to correctly answer each problem. Students struggling with setup or citation should seek help from a Writing Fellow. Deadlines are listed in the Course Calendar, but students are strongly encouraged to complete ICW exercises as soon as possible.

Core Grammar Exercises: Core Grammar for Lawyers is an online tool designed to ensure that students have the grammar skills expected in the legal profession. **Students must enter the correct class code** on the Core Grammar platform to receive credit for their work. Class codes are posted on Canvas. **Do not opt out of the Pre-Test.**

Core Grammar exercises are divided into lettered sections, each of which contains four lessons. Students must complete the Pre-Test, complete or test out of all lessons in sections A through F, and complete the Post-Test by the deadlines in the Course Calendar. If all tests and lessons are timely completed, **the first score earned on the Post-Test will be recorded as the student's Core Grammar score.** Students are strongly encouraged to complete Core Grammar assignments as soon as possible.

Preparation, Participation, and Professionalism:

The Course Calendar contains weekly class prep assignments, which may be supplemented by individual professors. These assignments are designed for students to prepare for class, attempt new skills, and stay on schedule for graded projects. Class prep assignments allow students, Writing Fellows, and professors to gauge learning and respond accordingly.

Class prep assignments are “entry tickets” for class, and students who fail to complete them may be asked to leave class. In such cases, the student will be marked absent. Failure to complete class prep assignments may also result in a failing grade for the course. A good-faith effort is required on all course assignments regardless of whether they are graded, and additional work may be assigned when a student's original assignment does not demonstrate minimum competency.

Students are expected to participate in class and behave as professionals. Participation and professionalism include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Completing reading and other assignments before class
- Arriving on time and attending class
- Fully engaging in class discussions and exercises
- Demonstrating a willingness to experiment with new skills and approaches
- Exhibiting respect for classmates, Writing Fellows, librarians, and professors
- Preparing for individual meetings with an agenda, emailed in advance to the professor
- Asking questions only after attempting to find answers using available resources
- Using technology appropriately

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An in-depth discussion of professionalism is posted on Canvas, and a description of appropriate preparation for individual meetings follows.

Preparation for Individual Meetings with Section Professor

Mandatory individual writing conferences take place twice during the semester. These are student-led conferences; as such, students are expected to complete a worksheet and prepare an agenda aimed at improving their understanding and their work product. Such preparation necessarily entails feedback review and self-reflection. Ideally, a student should prepare specific questions or direct the professor to specific parts of a paper. Broad questions like “how is my draft?” or “could you explain IRAC?” are not effective topics for an individual meeting. Targeted issues like “I am having trouble identifying the key facts that should be included in a case illustration” are appropriate. Students should be mindful that meetings last approximately 15 minutes and should tailor their agenda accordingly; typically, about three issues can be addressed in the time allotted. Professors may set additional requirements for meetings and will notify students of such requirements in advance. Students struggling with broad questions are encouraged to attend director, professor, or Writing Fellow office hours.

Where to Get Help

Program Concerns: Professor FitzGerald or Professor Trumbo

Class Content: Section Professor or Writing Fellow

Citation, Formatting, and Writing Style: Writing Fellows

Research: Reference Librarians

Basic Grammar: University Writing Center

Accommodations: University Disability Services | ods@gmu.edu | 703-993-2474

Please visit <https://ds.gmu.edu> for detailed information about the Disabilities Registration Process. If you have questions about how accommodations are implemented at the law school, please contact Annamaria Niels, Associate Dean for Administration and Student Affairs, at aniels@gmu.edu.

Syllabus Changes

The Director reserves the right to revise the syllabus and LRWA Rules. Students will be notified of any changes, and a revised syllabus will be posted on Canvas.

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Course Calendar

Week	Topics	To Prepare for Class
Week 1 8/21-8/23	Introduction to the Course & Office Memo Legal Writing Style Analyzing Statutes & Cases WF Case Anatomy	Read: LRWA I Syllabus & Rules ALW Ch. 1, 4, & 6; Appendix A (skim) Week 1 Module (on Canvas) Set up: ICW & Core Grammar accounts Submit: Library Tour in hard copy before 9:50 AM on 8/23 Submit and bring hard copy to class: Week 1 class prep
CORE GRAMMAR PRE-TEST due 8/25 before 11:59 PM		
Week 2 8/26-8/30	IRAC Structure <u>IRAC</u> : Rules & Case Illustrations Synthesizing Cases WF Basic Case Citation	Read: ALW Ch. 7 Week 2 Module Submit: Week 2 class prep
CORE GRAMMAR SECTIONS A, D & F due 9/1 before 11:59 PM		
Week 3 9/2-9/6	IRAC: Applying the Law, Considering Counter-Analysis & Concluding Revising for symmetry WF Signals and Short Forms	Read: ALW Ch. 8-9 & Ch. 16 (pp. 285-93) Week 3 Module Submit: Week 3 class prep
CORE GRAMMAR SECTIONS B, C & E due 9/8 before 11:59 PM		
Week 4 9/9-9/13	Organizing Authority Connecting IRACs WF Active Verbs	Read: ALW Ch. 5 & 12 Week 4 Module Submit: Week 4 class prep
ICW EXERCISES 1, 2, 3 & 5 due 9/15 before 11:59 PM		

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Week	Topics	To Prepare for Class
Week 5 9/16-9/20	Facts & Conclusion WF Surplus Words	Read: ALW Ch. 14-15 Week 5 Module Submit: Week 5 class prep
CLOSED MEMO CONFERENCE DRAFT due 9/22 before 11:59 PM		
Week 6 9/23-9/27	Individual Meetings (no group class session)	Read: ALW Ch. 16 Week 6 Module Email: Conference worksheet & list of questions to professor 24 hours before your meeting
CORE GRAMMAR POST-TEST due 9/29 before 11:59 PM		
Week 7 9/30-10/4	Research Session 1: Introduction to Research & Secondary Sources	Read: Nutshell Ch. 1-2; Appendices A & B (skim) Week 7 Module <i>Research materials will be added after class to Modules</i> Submit after class: Research Exercise 1 on Canvas before 11:59 PM on 10/4
CLOSED MEMO due 10/6 before 11:59 PM		
Week 8 10/7-10/11	Research Session 2: Cases & Citators	Read: Nutshell Ch. 3 Week 8 Module <i>Research materials will be added after class to Modules</i> Submit after class: Research Exercise 2 on Canvas before 11:59 PM on 10/11
RESEARCH PLAN due 10/13 before 11:59 PM		
Week 9 10/14-10/18	WF Research Meetings & Workweek (no group class session)	Read: ALW Ch. 5 (review) Be prepared to share your organized research materials and to report on your research progress at your meeting

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Week	Topics	To Prepare for Class
Week 10 10/21-10/25	Question Presented & Brief Answer Research Debrief Selecting & Using Cases Effectively WF Explanatory Parentheticals & Advanced Signals	Read: ALW Ch. 13 and reread ALW pp. 135-40 (“Choosing Prior Cases”) Week 10 Module Submit: Week 10 class prep
ICW EXERCISES 12 & 13 due 10/27 before 11:59 PM		
Week 11 10/28-11/1	Open Memo Questions IRAC in Other Contexts WF IRAC for Essay Exams	Read: ALW Ch. 18 Week 11 Module Submit: Week 11 class prep
OPEN MEMO CONFERENCE DRAFT due 11/3 before 11:59 PM		
Week 12 11/4-11/8	Individual Meetings (no group class session)	Email: Conference worksheet & list of questions to professor 24 hours before your meeting
Week 13 11/11-11/15	Common Issues Final Editing & Polishing	Read: ALW Ch. 16 (review) Week 13 Module Submit: Week 13 class prep
OPEN MEMO due 11/24 before 11:59 PM		

LRWA Rules

Scope of the Rules

These Rules apply to all students and assignments in LRWA I: Introduction to Legal Research, Writing, and Analysis (“course”). The Rules simulate court rules that practicing attorneys must follow.

Rule 1. Course Attendance & Engagement

- 1.1 **Course Attendance.** Pursuant to Academic Regulation 4-1, a student must be present for at least 75% of a class session to be counted as having attended that session, and any student missing more than 20% of the class sessions will not receive credit for the course. Attendance is also considered in assessing preparation, participation, and professionalism. Each mandatory individual meeting counts as a class session.
- 1.2 **Postings and Email.** Students must check Canvas and their George Mason email account each day.

Rule 2. Individual Work and Sources of Assistance with Assignments

- 2.1 **Restrictions on Assistance, Discussion, and Collaboration.** All coursework is expected to be the student’s own work. Therefore, except as provided below, students may not seek, provide, or accept writing, editing, or proofreading assistance from any person, nor may students use generative artificial intelligence to generate text submitted as coursework. Outside of class, students may not discuss the substantive content of course assignments, nor may students review each other’s coursework during the semester. Because later assignments build on earlier assignments, this prohibition applies to drafts and final assignments.
- 2.2 **Permitted Classroom Discussion, Group Exercises, and Peer Review.** Students are permitted to, and encouraged to, engage in collaborative discussion and writing exercises when directed by their professor or Writing Fellow. Professors or Writing Fellows may distribute student work for instructional purposes, including critique and analysis. Students may also be asked to exchange work for peer review exercises. Students should discuss fellow students’ work in a professional and respectful manner. Students may use AI in class as directed by the instructor.
- 2.3 **Permitted Assistance.** Students may seek help on course assignments from their section professor, law librarians, Writing Fellows, the Director, the Assistant Director, or the University Writing Center. Students may use the built-in features in Microsoft Word Editor to revise their work.

2.4 **Consequence(s) of Violation(s).** Students who violate these rules may receive a “0” for the assignment(s) involved, an “F” for the final grade in the course, a referral to the Honor Committee, or any combination of these penalties.

Rule 3. Plagiarism

3.1 **Plagiarism.** A student must provide proper attribution when using the words or ideas of another. Students must use quotation marks when using another writer’s exact wording or when only slightly altering another writer’s wording. Carelessness or lack of intent does not excuse plagiarism.

3.2 **Consequence(s) of Violation(s).** Students who violate this rule may receive a “0” for the assignment(s) involved, an “F” for the final grade in the course, a referral to the Honor Committee, or any combination of these penalties.

Rule 4. Submission of Assignments

4.1 **Due Dates and Times.** Assignments are due as provided in the Course Calendar. **For deadlines “before” a stated time, submissions at or after the stated time are late. Late submissions will receive a “0.”**

4.2 **Submission Method.** Students must follow the submission instructions outlined in the syllabus or assignment, or provided by the professor.

4.3 **Canvas Submissions.** For assignments that require submission on Canvas, students should access the appropriate assignment. Before submitting, students should ensure that they have attached the correct document. Resubmissions will not be allowed.

Because there may be a time delay or other technological issues on Canvas, students should **begin to submit assignments at least fifteen minutes before the deadline** to ensure timely submission. The clock on the Canvas will determine the time of the submission. **Students assume the risk of a late submission by waiting to submit an assignment until the final minutes before a deadline.**

In the unlikely event that an assignment fails to upload to Canvas because of a Canvas malfunction, a student may email the assignment to the Director at sfitzg11@gmu.edu. The time and date the email is received will determine the submission’s timeliness. In the event of an email submission, the Director may investigate the student’s activity on Canvas, including when submissions were attempted via Canvas, and any email submission may be rejected if the student did not first attempt submission via Canvas.

4.4 Penalties Associated with Anonymous Grading Numbers. Students must use an anonymous grading number (“AGN”) instead of their name on anonymous-graded assignments. A student’s final grade on any anonymous-graded assignment may be reduced by 0.25 of a point if the student fails to register an AGN by the deadline or submits the assignment with the wrong AGN.

4.5 Deadline Extensions. Only the Director may grant a deadline extension; students must not direct extension requests to section professors or Writing Fellows. Extensions will be granted rarely and only for circumstances entirely beyond the control of the student. Students seeking an extension must (1) inform the Director of the emergency before the due date and time for the assignment, if possible; (2) provide a written request to the Director as soon as practicable; and (3) provide documentation if requested. Extensions will not be granted for computer malfunctions, internet service disruptions, or other technological issues; such issues are not unexpected or rare.

Rule 5. Format

5.1 Formatting Requirements. Unless specifically directed otherwise, all writing assignments must be:

- In Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) format;
- Formatted for 8-1/2” x 11” unruled white paper with 1-inch margins;
- In black Times New Roman 12-point font (including footnotes and page numbers);
- Left aligned, with standard 0.5-inch indentation to indicate the beginning of a paragraph;
- Page-numbered, with only the typed page number centered at the bottom of the page;
- Double-spaced, with no extra spacing between paragraphs or sections *except* (1) extra space must be added to avoid stranding a heading at the bottom of a page, (2) footnotes, block quotations, multi-line section headings must be single-spaced, and (3) multi-line components in the main heading (e.g., a two-line subject) must be single-spaced.
- In compliance with the page or word limit, if stated;
- For office memoranda or portions of office memoranda, in compliance with LRWA Rule 6;
- For anonymous-graded assignments, students must include their anonymous grading number (AGN) in the file name and memorandum heading. No other identifying information should appear anywhere in the file name or the document. Students are therefore responsible for excluding their names and for removing metadata from anonymous-graded assignments.

5.2 **Special Formatting Instructions.** Whenever students are expected to follow additional or alternative formatting rules, students will be informed of such expectations in writing.

5.3 **Penalties for Non-Compliance.** Failure to comply with any formatting rule on an anonymous-graded assignment will result in a deduction from the final grade for the assignment of one-quarter (0.25) point per violation, not to exceed a cumulative one-point deduction on any given assignment.

Rule 6. Memorandum Heading

Office memoranda and portions of office memoranda must have the following heading:

MEMORANDUM

To: [INSERT professor's name]

From: [INSERT student's name or AGN, as appropriate]

Date: [INSERT assignment due date]

Re: [INSERT subject]

[INSERT body of memorandum]

Rule 7. Grade Appeals

Grade appeals on individual assignments are not permitted. Any student wishing to appeal a final course grade must follow the procedure outlined in the Academic Regulations.