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

LRWA II: Trial-Level Writing
SPRING 2025 SYLLABUS
LAW 097-all sections (3 credits)

Program Administration

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Textbooks & Platforms

We will continue to use *Legal Research in a Nutshell* ("Nutshell"), *The Bluebook*, and the ICW platform. Students should also have access to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure ("FRCP"), available on Westlaw, Lexis, and <https://www.law.cornell.edu/rules/frcp> (linked on Canvas). In addition, the following text is required for LRWA II and will be used again in LRWA III:

- Joan M. Rocklin et al., *An Advocate Persuades* (2d ed. 2022) ("AAP") (ISBN: 978-1-5310-1910-5)

Recommended resources:

- Richard Wydick & Amy Sloan, *Plain English for Lawyers* (7th ed. 2024) (or any earlier edition) (electronic version free through Lexis Study Aids)
- 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 "Spring 2025 Trial-Level Writing (LAW-097-001 & -002)." Day students should be automatically enrolled. Flex JD students should receive an email invitation to enroll; please accept that invitation.

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Course Description

LRWA II: Trial-Level Writing builds on the foundational legal research, writing, analysis, and citation skills acquired in LRWA I. In LRWA II, students learn to draft various litigation documents and learn to write persuasively. Students are also introduced to oral advocacy.

Learning Outcomes

Students will practice and improve on skills from last semester, and students will learn to apply those skills in communicating with different audiences for different purposes. By the end of the semester, students should be able to do the following:

- Locate statutes, regulations, court rules, and court documents
- Apply case law research skills to a problem arising under federal law
- Cite court rules, administrative regulations, statutes, federal cases, and litigation documents
- Recognize the varying roles of a lawyer from analyst to advocate
- Describe the pretrial litigation process
- Understand the function, form, and content of basic litigation documents
- Draft complaints, answers, motions, and motion briefs
- Recognize the similarities and differences between predictive and persuasive writing
- Use the basic structure of legal analysis to construct a persuasive argument
- Orally communicate research results to a supervisor
- Orally communicate an argument on behalf of a client

Course Format

The course format for Spring 2025 will be the same as Fall 2024. All sections of LRWA II will follow a uniform syllabus, with uniform projects and deadlines. Most weeks, LRWA II will meet in a small group setting led by a legal writing professor. On research weeks, research instruction will be led by law librarians.

Like last semester, classes will usually meet on the scheduled day for two hours. Please carefully review the course calendar, however, as some alternate meeting schedules occur throughout the semester. In particular, please note the special meeting times for the Moot Court First Year Competition ("FYC"). All students must participate in the first round of the FYC on **Saturday, April 5, 2025**. In addition, all day students must attend the FYC Finals on the afternoon of **Friday, April 11, 2025**; evening students may view the event live or recorded. Students with irreconcilable conflicts for these dates should promptly contact Professor FitzGerald.

Because LRWA II is a three-credit course, students should budget time for the more demanding assignments and accelerated pacing this semester.

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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.

Assessment	Weight
Project 1: E-memo & voicemail	10%
Project 2: Complaint	5%
Project 3: Discovery	5%
Project 4: Argument Outline	15%
Project 5: Oral Argument	5%
Project 6: Motion Brief	30%
Research Exercises	5%
ICW Exercises	5%
LRWA Exam	10%
Other assignments, preparation, participation, and professionalism	10%

Projects:

The projects this semester will be based on a single fact pattern and will track the path of a civil suit. Project details will be posted on Canvas.

On written assignments, whether draft or final, students should submit their highest quality work, as would be expected in law practice. 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 on Canvas **before** 11:59 pm on Friday following class.

Interactive Citation Workstation (ICW) Exercises: This semester, students must complete all problems in **Bluebook Exercises 6, 7 (Print State Statutes only), 8, 10, 11, and 16**. Each 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 and submit the exercise on the platform before the deadline. Students will have three chances to correctly answer each problem. Students struggling with citation should seek help from a Writing Fellow.

LRWA Exam:

The exam will test research and other core skills covered in LRWA I and II. More details on the content and format of the exam will follow.

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Other Assignments, Preparation, Participation, and Professionalism:

The Course Calendar contains anticipated weekly class prep assignments. These assignments may be supplemented or amended as the semester progresses; such updates will appear in the Canvas assignment posting. Class prep 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 before class begins may be asked to leave class. In such cases, the student will be marked absent.

The course calendar also includes other draft writing assignments due on Sunday evenings that will receive peer, Writing Fellow, or professor feedback. 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. Failure to complete any written assignment may result in a failing grade for the course.

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 appropriately for individual meetings
- Asking questions only after attempting to find answers using available resources
- Using technology appropriately

Preparation for Individual Meeting with Section Professor:

One mandatory individual writing conference takes place during the semester. This is a student-led conference; 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 fifteen 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.

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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 Nields, Associate Dean for Administration and Student Affairs, at aniields@gmu.edu.

Syllabus Changes

The Director reserves the right to revise the syllabus, course calendar, and LRWA Rules.

Course Calendar

Dates	Topics	Before Class
Week 1 Jan. 16 – 17	Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Statutes ▫ Legislative History 	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ LRWA II Syllabus & Rules ▫ Nutshell Ch. 4 & 5 ▫ Week 1 Module Complete: ICW Ex. 6, 7 (Print State Statutes only), 8, and 11 Submit: Week 1 Class Prep (list secondary sources helpful for trial problem)
Complete Research Exercise 1 on Canvas before 11:59 pm on Jan. 17		
Week 2 Jan. 20 – 24	Investigating & Initiating Litigation Litigation Overview Moving from Predictive to Persuasive Writing	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ AAP Ch. 1-2 & Appendix A (pp. 369-77 only) ▫ FRCP 11 ▫ Week 2 Module Complete: ICW Ex. 10 Submit: Week 2 Class Prep (summary of primary sources helpful for trial problem)

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Week 3 Jan. 27 – 31	Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Court Rules & Documents ▫ Discovery & Forms 	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Nutshell Ch. 7 ▫ Week 3 Module Complete: ICW Ex. 16
Complete Research Exercise 2 on Canvas before 11:59 pm on January 31 P1 (E-memo and voicemail) due before 11:59 pm on February 2		
Week 4 Feb. 3 – 7	Complaint & Answer	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ FRCP 7(a), 8, 10, 12 ▫ Week 4 Module Submit: Week 4 Class Prep (complaint filed in a similar case and explanation of why it is a useful sample)
P2 (Complaint) due before 11:59 pm on Feb. 9		
Week 5 Feb. 10 – 14	Discovery	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ FRCP 26, 33, 34, 36 ▫ Week 5 Module Submit: Week 5 Class Prep (discovery topics and devices)
P3 (Discovery) due before 11:59 pm on Feb. 16		
Week 6 Feb. 17 – 21	Motions Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Summary Judgment Standard Parts of a Motion Brief	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ AAP Ch. 8 & Appendix B ▫ FRCP 7(b), 56 ▫ Week 6 Module Submit: Week 6 Class Prep (posted worksheet)
Summary Judgment Standard due before 11:59 pm on Feb. 23		
Week 7 Feb. 24 – 28	Motion Brief <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Point Headings ▫ Argument 	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ AAP Ch. 3 (§§ 3.1 & 3.2 only), 5, 6 (pp.129-34 only) ▫ Week 7 Module Submit: Week 7 Class Prep (draft point headings, roadmap, and rules)

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Week 8 Mar. 3 – 7	Motion Brief <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Introduction▫ Statement of Facts▫ Conclusion	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ AAP Ch. 10▫ Review AAP Ch 8 (pp. 192-98 only)▫ Week 8 Module Submit: Week 8 Class Prep (draft topic sentences for rule explanation and application)
P4 (Argument Outline) due before 11:59 pm on Mar. 9		
Mar. 10 – 14	SPRING BREAK	
Statement of Facts due before 11:59 pm on Mar. 16		
Week 9 Mar. 17 – 21	Motion Brief <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Refining the Argument	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ AAP Ch. 6▫ Week 9 Module Submit: Week 9 Class Prep (draft argument on one issue)
Argument due before 11:59 pm on Mar. 23		
Week 10 Mar. 24 – 28	Oral Argument	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ AAP Ch. 11 (§§ 11.1-11.3 only)▫ Week 10 Module Submit: Week 10 Class Prep (draft motion brief introduction; oral argument outline)
Week 11 Mar. 31 – 4	MCB Mooting Sessions	Participation required
	Individual Meetings	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ AAP Ch. 7 (pp. 161-71)▫ Week 11 Module Follow professor’s guidance to sign up and prepare for meeting
Saturday, Apr. 5	First Year Competition <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ First Round	Attendance required
P5 (Oral Argument) due Apr. 5 (FYC First Round)		
Sunday, Apr. 6	First Year Competition <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Advancing Round	Attendance required for advancing competitors

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Week 12 Apr. 7 – 11	Final Editing	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ AAP Ch. 7 (pp. 171-77) ▫ Week 12 Module Bring to class: Complete motion brief
	First Year Competition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Final Round Apr. 11 	Day students must attend final round at courthouse; evening students must attend or view recording
P6 (Motion Brief) due before 11:59 pm on Apr. 13		
Week 13 Apr. 14 – 18	Research	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Nutshell Ch. 6 & 8 ▫ Week 13 Module
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Regulations ▫ Summer Practice 	
Complete Research Exercise 3 on Canvas before 11:59 pm on Apr. 18		
LRWA Exam TBA		

LRWA Rules

Scope of the Rules

These Rules apply to all students and assignments in LRWA II: Trial-Level Writing (“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, 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

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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.
- 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 Permitted Use of Generative AI.** Generative AI may be used in research in the same way a secondary source would be used. Generative AI may be used on assignments where the use of forms is permitted. As with forms, students must tailor the text to suit the assignment. Students may use generative AI in class as directed by the instructor.
- 2.5 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, an Academic Standards referral, 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, an Academic Standards referral, 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, assignment posting, 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 one-quarter (0.25) 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 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;
- 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 or signature block, as appropriate. 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. Document Headings

6.1 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]

6.2 Court documents must include the name of the court and the case caption as required by court rules.

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.