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

LRWA II: Trial-Level Writing
SPRING 2026 SYLLABUS
LAW 097-all sections (3 credits)

Program Administration

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Textbooks & Resources

We will continue to use Sloan's *Researching the Law: Finding What You Need When You Need It* ("Sloan"), *The Bluebook*, and *Plain English for Lawyers*. You should also have access to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure ("FRCP"), available on Westlaw, Lexis, and through [Cornell Law School's Legal Information Institute](#) (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)

Canvas

Log into Canvas and check that you are enrolled in a section of "Spring 2026 LRWA II: Trial-Level Writing (LAW-097)." Your section number will be the same as Fall 2025. The Canvas course will be published the first week of class.

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 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

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- 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 2026 will be the same as Fall 2025. 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, law librarians will lead research instruction.

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 11, 2026**. In addition, all day students must attend the FYC Finals on the afternoon of **Friday, April 17, 2026**; 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 more demanding assignments and accelerated pacing this semester.

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
Projects 1 to 4	20%
Project 5 (Oral Argument)	Ungraded but required for course completion
Project 6 (Motion Brief)	25%
Research Exercises	5%
LRWA Exam	50%
Other assignments, preparation, participation, and professionalism	Grade adjustment

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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.

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.

LRWA Exam

The Records Office will administer the LRWA exam. It will test research, analysis, writing, and citation concepts covered in class sessions, readings, and assignments. The exam will be closed book and closed notes, with no internet access. The best preparation for the exam is course engagement. Do the course readings; research and draft using the readings, slides, and strategies discussed in class; fully participate in class; and review feedback.

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. These assignments allow students, Writing Fellows, and professors to gauge learning and respond accordingly.

Students typically will not receive individualized grades or feedback on class prep assignments. 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

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- 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 CREAC?” are not effective topics for an individual meeting. Targeted issues like “I am having trouble identifying trigger facts to include 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.

Additional Resources

Citation

Students are expected to follow the Bluebook when citing legal authorities in coursework. Citation style and accuracy will be assessed on graded assignments. The *Interactive Citation Workstation (ICW) Exercises* can help students master the Bluebook, and students are encouraged to complete the exercises independently online on Lexis. To get started, log onto Lexis and navigate to “Interactive Citation Workstation.” Search for classes associated with “Professor Suzanne FitzGerald” and select “SPRING 2026 LRWA II.” **Bluebook Exercises 6, 7 (Print State Statutes only), 8, 10, 11, 14, and 16** cover skills needed for the assignments this semester, but students are welcome to complete other exercises. Students struggling with citation should seek help from a Writing Fellow.

LRWA Program and University Resources

The list below points to the best resources for common issues, but any student may seek help from the Director or Assistant Director. We are frequently on campus with our office doors open.

Program or Curriculum Concerns: Professor FitzGerald or Professor Trumbo

Class Content: Section Professor or Writing Fellow

Citation, Formatting, and Writing Style: any Writing Fellow

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. For questions about how the law school implements accommodations, please contact Annamaria Nields, Associate Dean for Student Affairs & Academic Support, anields@gmu.edu.

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Academic Support: Maggie Franke | Director, Student Academic Affairs | mfranke7@gmu.edu
 Jennifer Stanford | Assistant Director, Student Academic Affairs | jstanfo@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. 15 – 16	Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Statutes ▫ Legislative History 	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ LRWA II Syllabus & Rules ▫ Sloan Ch. 11-12 ▫ Bluebook B12 ▫ Week 1 Module Submit: Week 1 Class Prep (identify secondary sources and explain why they are helpful for the trial problem)
Complete Research Exercise 1 on Canvas before 11:59 pm on Jan. 16		
Week 2 Jan. 19 – 23	Investigating & Initiating Litigation Litigation Overview Shifting 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 Submit: Week 2 Class Prep (summary of primary sources helpful for trial problem)
Week 3 Jan. 26 – 30	Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Court Rules & Documents ▫ Discovery & Forms 	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Week 3 Module
Complete Research Exercise 2 on Canvas before 11:59 pm on January 30 P1 (E-memo and voicemail) due before 11:59 pm on February 1		
Week 4 Feb. 2 – 6	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, explanation, and critique)
P2 (Complaint) due before 11:59 pm on Feb. 8		

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Week 5 Feb. 9 – 13	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. 15		
Week 6 Feb. 16 – 20	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. 4, 8 & Appendix B▫ FRCP 7(b), 56▫ Bluebook B6, B8▫ Week 6 Module Submit: Week 6 Class Prep (posted worksheet and theme overview)
Summary Judgment Standard due before 11:59 pm on Feb. 22		
Week 7 Feb. 23 – 27	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)▫ Bluebook B17▫ Week 7 Module Submit: Week 7 Class Prep (draft point headings, roadmap, and rules; slot cases)
Week 8 Mar. 2 – 6	Motion Brief <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Refining the Argument	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ AAP Ch. 6 (pp. 134-44) & Ch. 7 (pp. 161-71)▫ Bluebook B5▫ Week 8 Module Submit: Week 8 Class Prep (refine Week 7 Class Prep and add topic sentences for rule explanation and application; identify any research gaps)
Mar. 9 – 13	SPRING BREAK	
P4 (Argument Outline & Complete Research) due before 11:59 pm on Mar. 15		

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Week 9 Mar. 16 – 20	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 9 Module Submit: Week 9 Class Prep (list of facts to be used in fact statement; draft one argument CREAC)
Statement of Facts due before 11:59 pm on Mar. 22		
Week 10 Mar. 23 – 27	Oral Argument and Editing	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ AAP Ch. 6 (pp. 144-59), Ch. 7 (pp. 171-77), Ch. 11 (§§ 11.1-11.3 only) ▫ Week 10 Module Submit: Week 10 Class Prep (draft motion brief introduction; oral argument outline)
Conference Draft Argument due before 11:59 pm on Mar. 29		
Week 11 Mar. 30 – Apr. 3	Individual Meetings	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Week 11 Module
Week 12 Apr. 6 – 10	MCB Mooting Sessions	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Week 12 Module Participation required
Saturday, Apr. 11	First Year Competition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ First Round 	Attendance required
P5 (Oral Argument) due Apr. 11 (FYC First Round)		
Sunday, Apr. 12	First Year Competition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Advancing Round 	Attendance required for advancing competitors
Week 13 Apr. 13 – 17	Final Editing	Read/View: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ AAP Ch. 6 (pp. 144-59), Ch. 7 (pp. 171-77) (review) ▫ Week 13 Module Bring to class: Complete draft of motion brief. Class attendance optional.
	First Year Competition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Final Round Apr. 17 	Attendance required. 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. 19		
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 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

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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;
- Labeled with a file name that indicates the assignment and the student’s last name or AGN, as appropriate;
- For anonymous-graded assignments, students must remove all identifying information, including metadata.

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. 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. 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.