

Law 528 (001) 20431
AI & Legal Research | Spring 2026 | 1 credit
Instructors: Rob Willey & Melanie Knapp
Tuesdays 9:40 – 11:40 a.m. | January 20 through March 3

Overview

AI is embedded in our legal research tools, portrayed in the news, and impacting legal education. This course provides an overview of where in development legal research AI tools are now and how they are being used in legal practice. The course aims to teach students to understand how to learn new AI tools and how to competently evaluate the available tools at any point in their legal careers.

Instructor Contact Information

Rob Willey, rwilley@gmu.edu

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Office hours: TBD, announced first day of class

Class Meeting Times

Classes will meet on Tuesdays from 9:40-11:40 a.m. from January 20 through March 3

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will:

- Develop an understanding of how AI can help aid legal research.
- Learn where AI excels in legal research and where it struggles.
- Acquire the knowledge needed to recognize potential hallucinations and verify the validity of AI outputs.
- Gain the skills needed to learn new AI tools quickly and effectively.
- Understand the AI legal research ecosystem and where categories of tools fit within the legal research process.
- Recognize how to plan a research strategy that integrates AI with primary sources, citators, and secondary materials.
- Understand the ethical requirements for the responsible use of legal research AI tools

Course Delivery

- **Pre-Class:** Complete the assigned readings and videos that are posted or linked on Canvas. Complete pre-class quizzes posted on Canvas.
- **In-Class:** Attend the class sessions to deeply discuss the readings, generate useful glossaries and use-case guides, practice using the AI tools with oversight and assistance, and discuss findings of this practice as a group. In the final two classes, students will deliver their Presentations.
- **Outside-of-class:** Think about and experiment with AI. Research and prepare a presentation on a topic for presentation during the final weeks of class. Draft a final essay on AI.

Evaluation

This course is graded on the Law School curve. Percentages below indicate how each element contributes to your overall course evaluation:

- **Class preparation (20%)** – Timely completion of assigned readings and videos and pre-class quizzes. Class preparation assignments are graded on a High Pass/Pass/Low Pass/No Credit basis. Attendance and participation in class.
- **Presentation (40%)** – Students will select an AI topic to present on. Topics should be approved by the instructors. The presentation is 15 minutes and should consist of a visual aid (e.g., PowerPoint presentation) and oral presentation. The presentation will be graded on 100 per cent scale.
 - Specifically, students should choose one legal research task to run through a tool. They should indicate:
 - Why they chose the tool
 - What the experience prompting/uploading/reiterating was
 - Evaluate the output
 - Discuss whether this was a good tool for this project
 - Whether AI generally would be a good tool for this project
- **Response to peers' presentations (20%)** – Feedback consists of attendance and respectful engagement with the presentation and submission of a feedback form provided by the instructors for each presentation. Feedback are graded High Pass/Pass/Low Pass/No Credit.
- **Final Essay (20%)** – A final reflective essay on AI will be assigned. The essay will be reasonably short (e.g., five double-spaced pages). Instructors will provide the topic and page limit during the final weeks of class. The essay should demonstrate engagement and understanding with the course content. The essay will be graded on a 100 percent scale.

Course Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

You are at all times encouraged to use AI and respond to it thoughtfully, sharing that information freely with your classmates and instructors. When you use AI, you will be expected to identify AI output, share the details of your prompts, and explain how you modified the output.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings and Assignments
Class 1 1/20	General overview of LLMs Specific Tool: Lexis Protégé (legal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• See Canvas
Class 2 1/27	Prompting; How Legal Tools Incorporate AI Specific Tool: Westlaw CoCounsel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• See Canvas
Class 3 2/3	Evaluating Outputs; AI Weaknesses and Mistakes Specific Tool: Bloomberg Law AI Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• See Canvas
Class 4 2/10	Strategies to Learn New AI Tools & Best Uses of AI in Legal Research Specific Tool: Gemini; general models included with Lexis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• See Canvas
Class 5 2/17	Legal Ethics and Deeper Thoughts on AI Specific Tool: Notebook LM; Patriot AI	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• See Canvas

Date	Topic	Readings and Assignments
Class 6 2/24	Student Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Canvas
Class 7 3/03	Student Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Canvas