I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A. This course presents the fundamentals of working in law office including basic principles and structure of management, administrative and substantive systems in the law office, law practice technology, managing one=s workload, professionalism, and human dynamics in a law office. Finding the right paralegal job, producing high-quality work, understanding billable hours, dealing with office politics, asking for a raise and advancing in a paralegal career

B. This course is an elective for the Central Texas College Paralegal / Legal Assistant degree plan.

C. This course is occupationally related and serves as preparation for careers in law.

D. Prerequisites: None

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, SURVIVING AND THRIVING IN THE LAW OFFICE, the student will:

A. Identify and explain the fundamental principles of management and administrative and substantive systems of the law office.

B. Establish realistic expectations for a paralegal career.

C. Identify and develop solutions for common problems encountered when working in a law office, including managing workload, asking for raises, and handling office politics.

D. Discuss ethical issues relating to law office operations.

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

A. To demonstrate knowledge of the terminology, resources and procedures which govern the management of a law office.
Measure: Students will participate in lectures and discussions relating to working in a law office and research and write on specific problem areas.

Standard: At least 80% of all students will receive a grade of A or better on each of these writing assignments.

B. To demonstrate organizational and critical thinking skills as they relate to working in a law office.
Measure: Students will participate in lectures and discussions relating to working in a law office and research and write on specific problem areas.
Standard: At least 80% of all students will receive a grade of A or better for this project.

III. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

The instructional materials identified for this course are viewable through www.ctcd.edu/books

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Reading Assignment:
As assigned by Instructor.

B. Projects, Oral Reports, Case Studies, Book Reports, Research Papers:
Students will be expected to complete and submit all assigned projects, reports, and other assignments as indicated by the Instructor.

C. Class Performance:
All students are required and expected to maintain the highest standards of scholastic honesty in the preparation of all course work and during examinations. For a description and consequences of scholastic dishonesty see the Central Texas College Catalog.

D. Class Participation:
The Student is expected to be on time for class, to have read the assigned materials, and be prepared to discuss the assignment in class. All persons must be present on exam day unless properly excused in advance. Students who are late for or absent from class have the absolute responsibility for obtaining the missed information. Students will be expected to take all scheduled examinations in the class period in which they are assigned. Students are expected to observe the Central Texas College policy for attendance as explained in the current catalog.

E. Each student is expected to act in a manner consistent with the College=s functions and goals as an institution of higher education. The Board of Trustees of Central Texas College states the following examples of misconduct constitute an interference with the lawful and orderly use of college premises, facilities, and activities for which students may be subject to disciplinary action. This is not an all-inclusive list of
prohibited behavior.

a. Interference with teaching, research, administration or CTC=s other responsibilities through disorderly conduct or disruptive behavior. This includes the use of or ringing of cell phones in the classroom. The instructor has the right to ask the student to leave the classroom and if the incident is repeated, the instructor has the right to ask the student to leave the class.

b. Refusing to depart from any property or facility of the College upon direction by College officials.

For more information on Non-Academic Misconduct please see the Student Handbook.

F. Academic Dishonesty: The College and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against any student accused of any form of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on academic work, plagiarism and collusion.

1. Cheating on academic work includes:
   a. Copying another student=s test paper, research paper or term paper.
   b. Using materials during a test that are not authorized by the test administrator.
   c. Collaborating with another student during a test or in academic preparation without permission.
   d. Using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting the contents of an unadministered test.

2. Plagiarism is defined as presentation for credit as one=s own idea or product derived from an existing source.

3. Collusion is defined as the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work for credit.

All questions of academic dishonesty are reviewed by the faculty member. If the student does not accept the decision of the faculty member, the student may appeal to the department chairperson. If the student disagrees with the decision of the department head, the student=s case will be referred to the Dean of the Central Campus. The student will be allowed to remain in class until the process is exhausted except when immediate suspension or expulsion is deemed necessary for the continuance of the educational mission or when the safety of persons or property is in jeopardy. (See Student Handbook for more details.)

G. Feedback is the return of data about the result of a process. Feedback will be provided via test scores, graded assignments, and/or instructor evaluation of the students’ progress. Each student is encouraged to take advantage of the many avenues for feedback available to them. For example, office hours are established primarily to
provide students access to their instructors to discuss their academic performance, to answer their substantive questions, and in some cases, to give them other academic guidance. While adjunct faculties do not normally have office hours, they are generally available before or after class to meet with you. E-mail is another easily available medium to obtain feedback. Additional feedback may be provided at the discretion of the instructor or upon the request of the student.

V. Research and Writing Papers (CC1, 2)

A. There will be a minimum of two major writing assignments that demonstrate organizational and critical thinking skills as they relate to working in a law office. The instructor may also have quizzes from time to time as part of the class participation evaluation.

VI. Semester Grade Computations

As per instructor notes.

VII. Notes and Additional Instructions from Course Instructor

A. Withdrawal from Course: There are occasions when it may be necessary to drop a course. In order to be officially withdrawn from the course, a student must obtain and complete a withdrawal form and have it signed thereon. The student=s transcript will show AW@ or AF@, depending on whether the student is passing or failing in his course at the time of withdrawal.

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<th>Week of Withdrawal</th>
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B. An Administrative Withdrawal: Results when a student is absent an excessive number of times, as defined in the current Central Texas College Catalogue and/or other published amendatory documentation. In such a case, the student is dropped from the course with a grade of @F@.

C. An Incomplete Grade: May be given only in those cases where, because of personal illness, death in the immediate family, school sponsored trip, or military orders, the student is unable to complete the final examination for a course. Prior approval from the instructor is required before the grade of AI@ is recorded. A Student who merely fails to show for the final examination will receive a zero for the final and AF@ for the course.

D. Cellular Phones and Beepers: Cellular phones and beepers will be turned off while the student is in the classroom or laboratory.
E. **American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA):** Disability Support Services provides services to students who have appropriate documentation of a disability. Students requiring accommodations for class are responsible for contacting the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS) located on the central campus. This service is available to all students, regardless of location. Explore the website at [www.ctcd.edu/disability-support](http://www.ctcd.edu/disability-support) for further information. Reasonable accommodations will be given in accordance with the federal and state laws through the DSS office.

F. **Instructor Discretion:** The instructor reserves the right of final decision in course requirements.

G. **Civility:** Individuals are expected to be cognizant of what a constructive educational experience is and respectful of those participating in a learning environment. Failure to do so can result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

H. **Nonattribution Policy:** In order to facilitate the free flow of information, no statements of personal opinion by the instructor concerning lawyers, judges, cases, or the legal system may be attributed to the speaker and is meant to be a confidential communication. This educational institution encourages complete freedom of expression in all academic endeavors. Comments made by instructors and students will not be attributed to them in any public forum or to any individual likely to transmit such statements to a public forum. However, participation in CTC academic events does not create a category of privileged communication. Our nonattribution policy protects all participants in our program, staff, faculty, students, speakers, and other guests against having their remarks and opinions publicly quoted or otherwise attributed to them without their express consent; allows such statements to be discussed, away from CTC, provided care is taken to avoid publicly identifying the speaker; and encourages speakers to be responsible for the substantive content of their statements.

**VIII. COURSE OUTLINE**

A. **Unit One: Setting Goals: What should you expect to achieve from a paralegal career** Hughes Chapters 1-4 and 13.

1. **Learning Outcomes:** Upon successful completion of this unit, the student will be able to:
   a. Identify the goals that lead to success
   b. Discuss why employees fail
   c. Discuss how goals can be a measuring stick for success
   d. Explain why goals should be your own
   e. Discuss why goals should be specific
   f. Explain why self-assessment is critical
   g. Describe who can help you achieve your goals
   h. Discuss why you cannot achieve success by yourself
   i. Discuss who your inner circle is and how to tailor that group to your
abilities and goals
j. Discuss others beyond the inner circle that can help with success
k. Explain how establishing professional relationships is an ongoing process
l. Discuss how one evaluates salary and benefits
m. Discuss the true price of a salary
n. Discuss the economics of paralegalism
o. Create a personal "mission statement"

2. Learning Activities
   a. Classroom lecture and discussion (FA4, 5)
   b. Student homework and study (CA1, CC1, 2, CA1)
   c. Reading Assignments (FA1, CA1)

3. Lesson Outline:
   a. Intro to Surviving & Thriving in a Law Office
   b. Goals setting
   c. Developing a personal mission statement
   d. Alliances
   e. Evaluation of your goals
   f. Evaluation of salary and benefits
   g. Lies, darn lies, and statistics
   h. How to know what you are worth
   i. Economics of paralegalism
   j. Non-economic factors to consider
   k. How to ask for a raise

B. Unit Two: Human Relations.
   Hughes Chapters 5, 12, 14; Edwards Chapters 1, 8, 9

1. Learning Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this unit, the student will be able to:
   a. Discuss what to do in preparation for a new job in a law office
   b. Determine what realistic expectations should be for a new paralegal employee
   c. Describe how a paralegal behaves as a professional
   d. Demonstrate good telephone etiquette in different situations.
   e. Describe office politics and discuss ways of properly dealing with it.
   f. Discuss factors that will promote effective client relationships
   g. Discuss ways to communicate effectively
   h. Identify communication barriers
   i. Explain the importance of good listening skills
   j. Discuss what stressors can exist in a law office.
   k. Describe what makes for good client relations.
   l. Discuss challenges and techniques when working with challenging clients, attorneys, and support staff.
2. **Learning Activities:**
   a. Classroom lecture and discussion *(FA4, 5)*
   b. Student homework and study *(CA1, CC1, 2, CA1)*
   c. Reading Assignments *(FA1, CA1)*
   d. Hands-on computerized assignments *(DE1-4, CE1-3)*

3. **Lesson Outline:**
   a. Getting off to a good start
      1. First Impressions
      2. What to do in preparation for the new job
      3. Realistic expectations
   b. Acting like a professional
      1. Dressing like a professional
      2. Nonverbal messages, language and behavior
      3. Learning to take directions
      4. Growing professionally
   c. Telephone etiquette
      1. General rules
      2. Modern technology
      3. Voice mail
      4. Dealing with difficult people
      5. Calling others
   d. Office Politics: Dangers lurking around every corner
      1. Acquiring power
      2. Building relationships with others
   e. Human Dynamics in a law office
      1. Stresses in a law office
      2. Good client relations
      3. Working with challenging clients
      4. Working with attorneys
      5. Working with support staff

C. **Unit Three: Managing Yourself**

1. **Learning Outcomes:** Upon successful completion of this unit, the student will be able to:
   a. Describe the various methods for managing one’s workload
   b. Discuss what kind of assignments a paralegal should expect.
   c. Define transactional and litigation assignments
   d. Discuss how to turn in high quality legal work.
   e. Discuss where to go for help within a law office.
   f. Demonstrate good communication skills to be employed in a legal setting.
g. Describe methods for achieving professional and personal balance.

h. Describe the steps to a happy, successful and balanced career.

i. Discuss ways to stay motivated in the legal profession.

2. Learning Activities:
   a. Classroom lecture and discussion (FA4, 5)
   b. Student homework and study (CA1, CC1, 2, CA1)
   c. Reading Assignments (FA1, CA1)

3. Lesson Outline:
   a. How to Manage Your Workload
      1. How to approach your workload
      2. Prioritizing
      3. What to do when you can’t get it done
   b. What kind of assignments can you expect
      1. Transactional versus litigation assignments
      2. Non-legal assignments
      3. How to turn in high quality work
   c. Where you go for help
      1. Whom to seek out and stay away from
      2. Other Resources
   d. Communication
      1. With Co-workers
      2. With Clients
      3. With The Court
      4. With Other firms
   e. Achieving professional and personal balance
      1. Is it just about the money?
      2. Steps to a happy, successful and balanced career
      3. You are in a marathon
f. Staying motivated
   1. Balance and variety
   2. Take advantage of opportunities within your law firm
   3. Seek out continuing education opportunities
   4. Be a regular guest speaker
   5. Teach a class

   1. Losing that “new” tag
   2. Now what happens?
   3. Looking back and looking ahead

D. **Unit Four**  What Is Important to a Law Office

1. **Learning Outcomes:** Upon successful completion of this unit, the student will be able to:
   a. Differentiate between timekeeping and billing
   b. Recognize major types of legal fee agreements
   c. Discuss the difference between billable and non-billable time
   d. Explain the concept of leveraging
   e. Explain how to set an hourly billing rate using the Rule of Three
   f. Discuss how the billing process works and what it entails
   g. Differentiate between and earned and an unearned retainer.
   h. Understand the importance of trust/escrow accounts
   i. Differentiate between gross income and net income
   j. Discuss the importance of cash flow
   k. Define income, gross income, and net income
   l. Explain the budgeting process
   m. Discuss what internal controls are
   n. Explain how to make docketing entries
   o. Discuss how to calculate court deadlines
   p. Explain why a poor docket system is harmful to a law office
   q. Differentiate between manual and computerized docket systems
   r. Discuss how a computerized docketing cycle process works
   s. Explain how a poor docket control system leads to ethical and malpractice claims
   t. Discuss alphabetic and numerical filing systems
   m. Explain centralized and decentralized filing systems
   n. Discuss the importance of closing and purging files

2. **Learning Activities:**
   a. Classroom lecture and discussion (FA4, 5)
   b. Student homework and study (CA1, CC1, 2, CA1)
   c. Reading Assignments (FA1, CA1)

3. **Lesson Outline:**
   a. Overview of what is important to a law firm
b. Timekeeping and Billing
   1. Fee arrangements
   2. Billing Practices and collection
   3. Handling the dreaded billable hour
   4. Ethical Issues
   5. Methodology

   c. Time Management
      1. Purpose
      2. Common time stealers
      3. Methodology

   d. Document Management
      1. Overview
      2. Discovery Documents
      3. Preparation for Trial
      4. Automated Systems

   e. Docket Control
      1. Deadlines, court dates, and appointments
      2. Systems, calendaring, and tickler systems
      3. Manual versus computerized systems

Other time blocks not specifically allocated above are spent with introductory topics, administrative matters, exams, and review classes (both before and after exams).