

CENTRAL TEXAS COLLEGE
SYLLABUS FOR LGLA 2480
COOPERATIVE EDUCATION FOR PARALEGALS/LEGAL ASSISTANTS
Semester Hours Credit: 4

INSTRUCTOR:
OFFICE HOURS: As per individual arrangement

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

- A. An advanced course with lecture and work-based instruction that helps students gain practical experience in the discipline, enhance skills and integrate knowledge. Indirect supervision is provided by the work supervisor while the lecture is provided by the college faculty or by other individuals under the supervision of the educational institution. **This is a paid experience.**
- B. This course is required to meet CAPSTONE requirements for the Central Texas College Legal Assistant Degree program unless the student has taken LGLA 2433 or has a minimum of one year of law office experience.
- C. This course is occupationally related and serves as preparation for careers in law.
- D. Prerequisite: LGLA 1307 and LGLA 1417, sophomore standing and consent of Department Chair, Director, or Site Coordinator.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, (Internship - Paralegal/Legal Assistant), the student will:

- A. Master the theory, concepts, and skills involving the tools, materials, equipment, procedures, regulations, laws, and interactions within and among political, economic, environmental, and legal systems associated with the particular occupation and the business/industry.
- B. Demonstrate ethical behavior, safety practices, interpersonal and teamwork skills, communicating in the applicable language of the occupation and the business or industry.

III. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

- A. 1. Instructional Materials for this course may be found at:
http://www.ctcd.edu/im/im_main.asp.
- 2. RECOMMENDED: (Texas Campuses Only): Texas Legal Assistant Handbook, James Publishing, 1996, with current updates.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND STRUCTURE

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.
- 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 on page 56.
- 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.

- a. Cheating on academic work includes:
 - 1. Copying another student's test paper, research paper or term paper.
 - 2. Using materials during a test that are not authorized by the test administrator.
 - 3. Collaborating with another student during a test or in academic preparation without permission.
 - 4. Using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting the contents of an un-administered test.
- b. Plagiarism is defined as presentation for credit as one's own idea or product derived from an existing source.
- c. 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.

COURSE STRUCTURE:

A. Practical Experience:

Each student will work in one of the above noted areas for one or more semesters. A total of 352 clock hours will be broken down as follows:

1. A total of 326 clock hours of field experience are necessary for successful completion of course requirements.
2. Field experience clock hours must be verified by the field supervisor or employing attorney. Suggested forms for recording the hours can be obtained from the instructor.
3. Field supervisors will be asked to complete an evaluation form and to recommend a course grade for each student.
4. Students must keep a daily work sheet which will indicate what type of activity was undertaken, what the student's involvement was, what amount of time was spent on each activity, and what benefit that activity gave to the student's education. Worksheet hours must account for all work hours claimed by the student. Approximately 20 clock hours will be required.
5. Each student in this internship will participate in an additional 6 hours of pre-training classroom time with the course instructor (One hour and thirty minutes discussing ethics).

B. Records and Reports:

Certain forms and records are needed to document experience and provide evaluation materials for the instructor:

1. **Internship Time Sheet:** A summary form that provides a documented record of student hours in the field experience.
2. **Internship Log/Diary:** The Internship Diary/Log is a daily journal sharing the experience of the internship with the course instructor. After each period in the work environment, the student is to fill in this form and be prepared to discuss events noted in group and/or individual class periods. Generally each day's entry is usually one paragraph in length and may focus on a particular experience or learning situation that highlighted the day rather than a repetitious recounting of a chronology of events. Care should be exercised to insure no confidential information is reported. The diary/log will be reviewed periodically by the course instructor for comments and guidance.
3. **Papers:** As part of the counseling time, students will prepare a 2 page project proposal due within 10 days of starting the internship detailing the proposed placement, job description, and goals, and a 5 page follow-up paper due

within 10 days of completion of the internship describing the job experience, the pluses and minuses of the experience, recommendations for the future, what courses best helped them for the experience, and what courses or related training could have better prepared them.

C. Grading:

- | | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 1. | Internship Diary/Log | 30% |
| 2. | Recommendations by field supervisor | 50% |
| 3. | Counseling time with Course Instructor | 20% |

V. FIELD SETTINGS AND EXPERIENCES

A. For field internship credits, students are expected to:

1. Apply to the course instructor during the semester before field internship registration for approval.
2. Be prepared to gain all field internship experience outside their regular job setting.
3. Register for the field internship after approval of setting is given and arrange an interview with the appropriate contact in the office of choice.
4. Inform the instructor of setting, duties and responsibilities and expectations.
5. Always act in an appropriate and professional manner, keeping appointments, following office rules, and generally being an ambassador of good will for CTC and the Legal Assistant Program.

B. The student will be responsible for obtaining employment, either compensated or not, in an office or agency of their choosing that will be able to properly utilize the student and provide the educational training required of the internship. CTC and the course instructor shall not be responsible for obtaining employment for students.

C. Participating employers must provide appropriate supervision for the CTC legal assistant student and to provide a formal evaluation at the conclusion of the internship. A sample format follows this syllabus as exhibit A.

D. Field Internship experiences for the student must follow a logical developmental sequence. There should be an orientation period followed by observations with communication, with a learning and task period with a possible co-legal assistant or similar responsibilities, following that.

Students must be supervised at all times in the field setting, including anytime that the student is allowed to interview clients. Field supervisors will be expected to determine time periods for individual students according to the skills noted and the situations involved. Experience should cover all the spectrum of the responsibilities of a legal assistant to include interviewing of clients, drafting of documents, legal research, legal analysis of situations, telephone answering, scheduling, etc. There will not be a designated percentage of time that must be spent on every aspect, but the internship should offer the student an opportunity to deal with all areas. Nevertheless, it is essential that the student be trained to perform duties requiring the appropriate skill level of a legal assistant and not merely clerical. Therefore, significant amounts of time should not be used for photocopying, general receptionist duties, errands, or filing.

VI. 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 "W" or "F", depending on whether the student is passing or failing in his/her course at the time of withdrawal.

Friday of 3 rd week for	5-week courses
Friday of 4 th week for	6-week courses
Friday of 6 th week for	8-week courses
Friday of 7 th week for	10-week courses
Friday of 9 th week for	12-week courses
Friday of 12 th week for	16-week courses

- 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 "IP" is recorded. A student who merely fails to show for the final examination will receive a zero for the final and "F" for the course.
- D. 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 statement 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.

Exhibit A

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL
LEGAL ASSISTANT EVALUATION FORM

Legal Assistant _____ Hire Date _____
Review Period _____ Department _____

Evaluating Attorney _____

*Note: The information contained in this Evaluation Form may be released to the legal assistant upon request.

E. CONTACT. Indicate the contact you have had with the legal assistant during the review period.

- ___ *Substantial.* Regular daily or weekly contact. Included in most attorney briefing/strategy meetings.
- ___ *Occasional.* Specific assignments and routine maintenance work requiring occasional personal instruction.
- ___ *Infrequent.* Limited contact.

F. WORK PERFORMED. Describe the work performed for you, listing some examples. Specify the degree of difficulty and expertise required.

G. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION. Evaluate the legal assistant in each of the following areas. Check the blank to the left of the rating description that best summarizes the legal assistant’s performance. Use the space on the back of the last page for additional comments. Please read all category descriptions before completing the evaluation.

1. WORK PRODUCT. (Consider the legal assistant’s ability to understand what is required and to provide a work product that is both thorough and complete. Consider the speed and efficiency with which the work product is returned.)

- ___ *Superior.* In most cases needs little instruction. Takes initiative in asking questions if aspects of the task are unclear. Is resourceful in developing more efficient ways to complete projects. Demonstrates ability to consider factors not indicated by attorney that make the work product more useful.
- ___ *Very Good.* Needs instruction once or twice. Legal assistant completes take thoroughly and keeps attorney informed as to work progress.
- ___ *Good.* Sometimes needs to do a task several times before he/she feels comfortable. Substantial attorney supervision is necessary during first attempts at project. Once legal assistant is comfortable with the job requirements, he/she does thorough and complete work product.

___ *Marginal*. Has difficulty understanding what kind of work product is required. Sometimes does and incomplete job and takes more time than should be needed.

___ *Unacceptable*. Seldom masters what is required to the point where he/she cannot provide a thorough and complete work product.

___ *No Opportunity to Form an Opinion*.

2. *EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF WORKLOAD*. (Consider the volume of work produced and the efficient use of time in order to meet deadlines.)

___ *Superior*. Highly efficient. Completes all assignments successfully, on time, and without prompting.

___ *Very Good*. Efficient. Most assignments completed successfully. Rarely misses deadlines.

___ *Good*. Basically efficient. Assignments are generally completed successfully within a reasonable amount of time.

___ *Marginal*. Need to improve efficiency. Assignments sometimes go uncompleted. Needs substantial attorney supervision.

___ *Unacceptable*. Inefficient. Deadlines are rarely met. Assignments often uncompleted.

___ *No Opportunity to Form an Opinion*.

3. *ABILITY TO WORK WELL UNDER PRESSURE*. (Consider the ability of the legal assistant to make sound judgments and to organize work under pressure.)

___ *Superior*. Nearly always works well under pressure. Maintains organization and control over assignments; continues to make sound judgments.

___ *Very Good*. In most cases work well under pressure; rarely makes unsound judgments or becomes disorganized.

___ *Good*. Generally works fairly well under pressure; sometimes make judgments that are not always carefully considered or becomes slightly disorganized.

___ *Marginal*. Frequently fails to work well under pressure. Tends to become disorganized and to exercise poor judgment.

___ *Unacceptable*. Rarely works well under pressure. Allows pressure to interfere with effective management of assignments; and often uses poor judgment.

___ *No Opportunity to Form an Opinion*.

4. ANALYTICAL SKILL. (Consider the legal assistant's ability to digest and analyze the facts of a particular case or assignment and the thoroughness of factual research.)

_____ *Superior.* Is exceptionally thorough in gathering facts and quick to master the facts. Depth of understanding evidenced by the quality of work product.

_____ *Very Good.* Is thorough in gathering information. Masters facts quickly and uses them well in preparation of work product.

_____ *Good.* Generally thorough in gathering information. Masters facts over an acceptable period of time. Sometimes needs attorney direction in developing the information for purposes of work product.

_____ *Marginal.* Sometimes misses essential information during factual investigation. Knowledge of facts is incomplete. Needs substantial attorney direction in order to correctly analyze facts.

_____ *Unacceptable.* Often misses essential information during factual investigation. Knowledge of facts is seriously deficient. Work product needs substantial revision in order to ensure completeness. Sometimes careless in presentation of facts to attorney.

_____ *No Opportunity to Form an Opinion.*

5. PROFESSIONALISM. (Consider the extent to which the legal assistant is personally involved in his/her work; the extent to which he/she takes the job requirements seriously; and the extent to which he/she demonstrates responsibility for high quality work in all instances.)

_____ *Superior.* Exhibits exceptionally high level of personal involvement in assignments and is extremely responsible. Takes initiative.

_____ *Very Good.* Highly involved in assignments. Demonstrates strong commitment to his/her work. Very dependable.

_____ *Good.* Generally dependable and involved in assignments. Demonstrates average commitment to his/her work.

_____ *Marginal.* Frequently appears to lack interest in assignments. Needs substantial follow-up by attorney as to both deadlines and quality of work.

_____ *Unacceptable.* Unwilling to assume to necessary responsibility.

_____ *No Opportunity to Form an Opinion.*

6. ABILITY TO WORK INDEPENDENTLY. (Consider the legal assistant's ability to exercise good judgment by making well-reasoned choices and then to maintain necessary communication with attorney.)

_____ *Very Good.* In most cases makes good decisions. Occasionally needs attorney assistance in defining options. Keeps attorney well informed.

___ *Good.* Usually considers options before making a decision. May not recognize the need to request attorney assistance in defining options.

___ *Marginal.* Has difficulty making well-reasoned choices after options are defined. Neglects to cover necessary material with attorney and does not readily call upon attorney for assistance or explanation.

___ *Unacceptable.* Is not able to make reasonable choices after options are defined. Rarely keeps attorney informed and lacks understanding as to appropriate area of legal assistant work as defined by attorney.

___ *No Opportunity to Form an Opinion.*

7. QUALITY OF WRITTEN WORK. (Consider the ability of the legal assistant to express himself/herself in clear, precise language; thoroughness; organization; accuracy and neatness; grammar.)

___ *Superior.* Exceptionally clear, precise, and thorough work that is neat and free from errors.

___ *Good.* Needs occasional assistance but is able to gain the necessary cooperation and confidence.

___ *Marginal.* Unable to handle outside assignments without substantial attorney assistance. Has difficulty developing necessary confidence and cooperation.

___ *Very Good.* In most cases, precise, clear, and thorough. Rarely lacking in one or more product is most always lacking in one or more respects.

___ *No Opportunity to Form an Opinion.*

8. OUTSIDE CONTACT. (Consider the extent to which the legal assistant is required to work with persons outside the firm, e.g., co-counsel attorneys, client, state and federal agencies, state and federal court personnel.)

___ *Superior.* Consistently demonstrates ability to readily gain the cooperation and confidence the assignment requires. Establishes excellent working relationships.

___ *Very Good.* Generally gains cooperation and confidence. Establishes cooperation and confidence.

___ *Good.* Needs occasional assistance but is able to gain the necessary cooperation and confidence.

___ *Marginal.* Unable to handle outside assignments without substantial attorney assistance. Has difficulty developing necessary confidence and cooperation.

___ *Unacceptable.* No understanding of what is required in order to gain the necessary cooperation and confidence. Complaints received with regard to legal assistant's behavior.

___ *No Opportunity to Form an Opinion.*

COMMENTS. Below and on the back of this form, space is provided to allow elaboration of any of the ratings checked under the preceding categories. You are encouraged to comment in general upon the legal assistant's performance: strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement.

