

TULANE SCHOOL OF CONTINUING STUDIES - PARALEGAL PROGRAM
COURSE SYLLABUS
(Updated January 2008)

Course Title: PRO BONO PRACTICE

Course Number: PARA 423-01

Course Credits: 3 credit hours

Course scheduled: (Elmwood or Uptown Campus)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Introduction to public service agencies utilizing paralegals in pro bono publico work. Provide a comprehensive understanding of these agencies and the task paralegals are expected to provide. Emphasis is given to legal research and writing.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Give students an overview of the paralegal's professional responsibility of performing pro bono work and the legal service agencies utilizing paralegals in pro bono publico positions. Upon completion students will possess a comprehensive understanding of these agencies and the pro bono tasks paralegals are expected to provide with emphasis on paralegal ethics and writing.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

Lois Elliott, M.A., Paralegal

E-mail: lelliott@tulane.edu

Course online: [http:// tulane.blackboard.com](http://tulane.blackboard.com) (log on and click Pro Bono Practice)

Office Hours Available: After class and at work (M-F 8:30-4:30).

COURSE INFORMATION:

Prerequisites: Paralegal Core Courses

Course Materials: Handouts (no course textbook available).

Materials on legal service agencies covered; examples of pleadings, forms etc.; copies from Louisiana Codes and Revised Statutes (Juvenile, Civil and Criminal); copies of Federal Codes; materials from Social Security Administration and other state and federal agencies; law and paralegal journal articles; internet resources (depending on tech support available).

INSTRUCTIONAL INFORMATION:

Methods and Procedures:

Lectures, invited speakers, audio-visuials (if tech support available), class discussions, tests, take-home projects and written assignments, mid-session & final exams.

Grading:

- a. Written assignments & tests 50%
- b. Mid-term & Final exams 50%

All assignments must be typed/word-processed.

INSTRUCTOR'S POLICIES:

a. Attendance Requirements and Class participation:

The course does not use a textbook and materials will be handed out at each session. It is therefore of the utmost importance to attend each class.

b. Make-up assignments and exams:

All assignments must be handed in no later than the due date or will be graded F = 0 (unless instructor is notified of real emergency and other arrangements are made).

Instructor will refer to the TULANE UNIVERSITY CODE OF ACADEMIC CONDUCT for any questions regarding all academic work. See <http://college.tulane.edu/honorcode.htm>.

DETAILED COURSE CONTENTS:

Class 1 – 3 Hours:

INTRODUCTION TO COURSE. Review of syllabus, course topics & materials, assignments and exams. Review of online Blackboard course (depending on tech support).

PRO BONO PUBLICO SERVICE. What is pro bono? ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct Rule 6.1. ABA Model Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistant Services Guideline 10. NALA and NFPA Guidelines. Ethics for pro bono paralegals. Funding of pro bono/legal services and its problems. The increasing need for attorney and paralegal volunteers. Agencies that use paralegal volunteers.

Assignment: Review journal articles on pro bono “work” and draft concise responses to a series of questions.

Class 2 – 3 Hours:

THE INDIGENT POPULATION AND ITS LEGAL PROBLEMS. Who is indigent and entitled to free legal services? The homeless and the causes of homelessness. Federal poverty guidelines. Speaker from local public service agency on the legal problems of the indigent and post-Katrina legal issues. Excerpt from selected PBS Frontline documentary. Attorney specializing in public interest/homelessness issues to speak.

Class 3 – 3 Hours:

THE PRO BONO PROJECT (TPBP). Funding, population serviced, cases handled. Executive Director/staff attorney/staff paralegal to speak. The role of the paralegal and the tasks he/she can perform at the TPBP, for example the Project’s *Divorce Workshop*. Pleadings and forms a paralegal prepares for an Art. 103 divorce. Filing in Civil District Court and follow-up with final divorce judgment.

Assignment: draft divorce pleadings, complete necessary legal forms, calculate all deadlines to obtain divorce judgment.

Class 4 – 3 Hours:

TPBP. Social Security Benefits Program. Paralegals can represent a disabled client at a Social Security Hearing. Disability rules and regulations. How a paralegal can build a case and win. Volunteer attorney/paralegal to speak.

Class 5 – 3 Hours:

NEW ORLEANS LEGAL ASSISTANCE (known as NOLAC). Funding, population serviced, cases handled. Tasks paralegals can perform. An example: NOLAC's Housing Law Dept: landlord/tenant issues, evictions and eviction defense.

Assignment: prepare eviction forms/pleadings, calculate costs to file and deadlines to obtain proper eviction.

Class 6 – 3 Hours:

NOLAC. Staff attorney to speak on post-Katrina housing and landlord/tenant issues. *Review for mid-semester exam.*

Class 7 – 3 Hours: MID-SEMESTER EXAM

Class 8 – 3 Hours:

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA). Origins and funding. Abused and neglected children. Training and duties of the CASA advocate. PBS Frontline Documentary on child social services.

Assignment: review a CASA file and draft concise responses to a series of questions.

Class 9 – 3 Hours:

CASA. The Louisiana Children's Code. Temporary/permanent removal of children from parental home, foster care, adoptions. CASA Executive Director/Volunteer Coordinator to speak.

Class 10 – 3 Hours:

CRIMINAL DEFENSE FOR INDIGENTS. Indigent defendants' rights in criminal cases: The Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments to the US Constitution, the LA Constitution and Criminal Code. PBS Documentary on wrongfully incarcerated inmates.

Assignment: review a criminal court record and draft concise responses to a series of questions.

Class 11 – 3 Hours:

AGENCIES THAT ASSIST INDIGENT DEFENDANTS. The Louisiana Indigent Defender Program (LIDP); the Louisiana Public Defense Association (LAPDA); the Louisiana Indigent

Defense Assistance Board (LIDAB); the Louisiana Appellate Project (LAP); the Innocence Project. Mandates, origins and funding. Tasks paralegals can perform. Speaker from selected agency on the rights of indigent defendants.

Class 12 – 3 Hours:

AIDSLAW OF LOUISIANA, INC (ALL). Origins, funding, legislation, cases handled. Aspects of end-stage planning: wills, living wills, power-of-attorney, insurance, disability benefits, discrimination, testing, custody issues. Tasks paralegals can perform. The Ryan White Act. The Americans with Disabilities Act. Excerpts of ABC Nightline report/interview with Ryan White.

Class 13 – 3 Hours:

AIDSLAW. Executive Director/Staff Attorney to speak.
Review for final exam.

Class 14 – 3 Hours: FINAL EXAM