

**SYLLABUS**  
**SOUTH SUBURBAN COLLEGE - Spring 2009**  
**PLA 101, FUNDAMENTALS OF PARALEGALISM**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Patrick T. Deane, J.D., LL.M  
**MEETS:** Online  
**Office:** (708) 596-2000, Ext. 2538

**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays and Thursdays. 8:00 a.m.-9:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. - 11:20 a.m.

**RATIONALE:** This course is designed to give students a basic understanding of the various functions of paralegal/legal assistant in the American legal system and to build a foundation of basic knowledge and skill development which is necessary for someone seeking a career in the paralegal/legal assistant field.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Gain a basic understanding of the organization and operation of the legal system.
2. Gain an understanding of the functions of a paralegal in the practice of law and of the various specialty areas of the law, as well as the types of law practices.
3. Gain an understanding of the legal and ethical responsibilities of a paralegal and of attorneys.
4. Gain an understanding of the use and location of resources for legal research purposes.
5. Gain the necessary fundamental skills and techniques to assist an attorney in the daily practice of law and in drafting legal documents.
6. Gain the knowledge of law office procedures involving gathering of factual information, investigative techniques, interviewing skills, assembly and summarizing information for the purpose of document preparation, claim settlement and trial.
7. Gain a basic understanding of the procedures involved in civil litigation and criminal trials.
8. Gain a basic understanding of how to locate relevant statutory and case law.
9. Gain a familiarization of the legal environment; the courts, law libraries, law offices and the computer equipment and software available and in use.
10. Practice practical applications of the skills developed.

**OTHER AIMS OF THE COURSE:** The student will gain awareness of:

1. The roles of law, attorneys and paralegals in our society.
2. The ethical considerations affecting lawyers and paralegals.
3. The attention to precision in thought, language and expression needed to succeed as a Paralegal.

**TEXT:** The text for this course is Introduction to Law for Paralegals: A Critical Thinking Approach, 4th Edition by Katherine A. Currier and Thomas E. Eimermann, 2009. 880 pages. ISBN: 978-0-7355-6719-1.

### ***INSTRUCTOR'S EXPECTATIONS:***

- 1) Treat this course as if it were your job. You are preparing to be a paralegal. Being a paralegal is a career and, as such, carries certain responsibilities.
- 2) Plagiarism/cheating will not be tolerated and will result in an immediate "F" for the course and written documentation will be made to the appropriate school officials. This "F" cannot be changed to a "W" if you attempt to withdraw.
- 3) Keep up with the reading assignments. You can't contribute to bulletin board discussions or participate in activities if you don't know what we're talking about. Bulletin board discussions and/or participation in activities will be an important part of the learning process and also an important part of your final grade. It will be expected by the instructor that you have read the material and that you are prepared to discuss the material in an intelligent manner.
- 4) Even though this course is being delivered online, you must be respectful of your fellow students. Refrain from profanity in any manner or harsh words directed at the instructor or a fellow classmate. In other words, extend everyone the same courtesies you expect for yourself.
- 5) If you are having difficulty with the subject matter, it is **your** responsibility to contact the instructor for help.
- 6) Late assignments will not be tolerated in the workplace and therefore any late assignments will NOT be accepted or graded in this class.
- 7) The Academic Code of Conduct, the Student Code of Conduct and the Violence and Threats of Violence Code will be in force in this class and the code is incorporated into this syllabus by reference. The Academic Code of Conduct can be found in the latest issue of the college catalog and it IS incorporated by reference into this course.
- 8) You are responsible for all material in the book in the chapters covered in this course as well as all material covered in class and all this material is considered fair game for a quiz or examination.

### ***CORRESPONDENCE***

All correspondence for our class will take place within WebCT (the course's web page). In WebCT, under "Communication Tools", you will find a place for bulletins and for private mail. Please follow these instructions for class communications:

1. Use the Discussion Board to ask each other questions or to ask me questions that I can respond to in a public manner.
2. Use Private Mail as a place for private discussions between you and me or another student.

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:** PLA 101 – Fundamentals of Paralegalism (3 credit hours)

This course is designed to give students a basic understanding of the various functions of a paralegal/legal assistant in the American legal system and to build a foundation of basic knowledge and skill development which is necessary for someone seeking a career in the paralegal/legal assistant field.

**GRADING AND TESTING:**

You will be given 4 examinations during the course of this semester. Additionally, you will be given a mid-term INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENT and a final INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENT, which must be completed and posted on the bulletin board.

Each examination is worth 100 points and the outside INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENTS will account for 100 points. Consequently, the 4 examinations and related outside INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENTS will account for a total of 100% of your final grade with the "breakdown" as follows:

EXAMINATION 1 -- 100 POINTS  
EXAMINATION 2 -- 100 POINTS  
EXAMINATION 3 -- 100 POINTS  
EXAMINATION 4 -- 100 POINTS  
MID-TERM INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENT -- 50 POINTS  
FINAL INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENT -- 50 POINTS

The grading scale used to determine your final grade is:

450 TO 500 TOTAL POINTS = A  
400 TO 449 TOTAL POINTS = B  
350 TO 399 TOTAL POINTS = C  
300 TO 349 TOTAL POINTS = D  
0 TO 299 TOTAL POINTS = F

**MANDATORY ASSIGNMENTS:** For each exam, in addition to the exam itself, you must post a MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT on the Bulletin Board. The deadline to post your MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT is the first day that the next exam opens. For instance, if exam 1 opens at 11:00 a.m. on 02/09/2009, you must post your MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT for exam 1 by 11:00 a.m. on that day. If your assignment is posted after 11:00 a.m. on the day it is due, I will not grade your assignment. If exam 2 opens at 11:00 a.m. on 03/09/2009, you must post your MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT for exam by 11:00 a.m. on that day and so on for each exam. If you fail to post a significant MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT for any particular exam by the deadline, I will deduct 10 points from your exam score.

**FAIR WARNING!** In the past, some students have done very well on the exams but have neglected their duty to post their MANDATORY ASSIGNMENTS on the Bulletin Board in a

timely fashion. This really hurt their final grade. It is not enough to do well on the exams! You must be very active on the bulletin board to do well in the course.

My advice is to make sure you post your MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT on time (per exam) and make sure you get active on the Bulletin Board. This is the best way to earn the maximum points in the course.

Moreover, for each exam, you can earn up to 10 additional extra credit points by becoming active (in addition to your MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT posting) on the Bulletin Board discussing relevant legal issues from the materials or responding to other classmates MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT postings. The deadline for extra credit postings per exam is the closing date of the upcoming exam. For instance, if exam 1 closes at 11:00 a.m. on 02/16/2009, that is the latest day and time you can post extra credit responses on the bulletin board for exam 1. If exam 2 closes at 11:00 a.m. on 03/16/2009, that is the latest day and time you can post extra credit responses on the bulletin board for exam 2 and so on for each exam. Please note that this is the only way to earn extra credit points in this course. I will not entertain any additional requests for extra credit nor will I allow you to "go back" and post after the applicable deadline in hopes of earning additional points.

There is a link at the bottom of this page that lays out all of the instructions/rules regarding the MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT for each exam. Make sure you understand each and every detail regarding the MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT and if you do not, you need to contact me.

**EXAMS AND INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENTS:** You must take each examination AND POST ANY INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENTS in the scheduled time frame. Generally, there will be no make-up examinations/INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENTS allowed. However, if you obtain the instructor's prior approval, you may be allowed to take a make-up examination/INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENTS if the instructor, in his sole discretion, believes your situation warrants the allowance of a make-up examination/ INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENTS. Please note that there will be no make-up examination/ INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENTS allowed without the instructor's prior approval.

In regard to the above-mentioned examinations, each examination will contain multiple choice/TRUE/FALSE type questions and will be taken and graded online. ALSO, THE INTERACTIVE ASSIGNMENTS WILL REQUIRE YOU TO INTERACT WITH THE CLASS ON THE BULLETIN BOARD.

EXAM 1 WILL COVER CHAPTERS 1-3  
EXAM 2 WILL COVER CHAPTERS 4-7  
EXAM 3 WILL COVER CHAPTERS 8-11  
EXAM 4 WILL COVER CHAPTERS 12-15

Each exam must be completed no later than the date and time indicated below. The exams will be 50 questions/items (multiple choice, true/false, etc.) and you will each exam online in WebCT. Obviously, each exam will be open book BUT each exam is also timed to 90 minutes. Therefore, you will have to study and prepare so that you do not waste time looking up answers. Again, I provide 90 minutes for each exam so start studying now.

## ***EXAMINATION SCHEDULE***

### **EXAM 1 (CHAPTERS 1-3)**

--the MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT for Exam 1 must be posted no later than 11:00 a.m. on 02/09/2009.

-- Exam 1 will be made available 11:00 a.m. on 02/09/2009 and must be completed no later than 11:00 a.m. 02/16/2009.

### **EXAM 2 (CHAPTERS 4-7)**

--the MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT for Exam 2 must be posted no later than 11:00 a.m. on 03/09/2009.

-- Exam 2 will be made available 11:00 a.m. on 03/09/2009 and must be completed no later than 11:00 a.m. 03/16/2009.

### **EXAM 3 (CHAPTERS 8-11)**

--the MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT for Exam 3 must be posted no later than 11:00 a.m. on 04/06/2009.

-- Exam 3 will be made available 11:00 a.m. on 04/06/2009 and must be completed no later than 11:00 a.m. 04/13/2009.

### **EXAM 4 (CHAPTERS 12-15)**

--the MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT for Exam 4 must be posted no later than 11:00 a.m. on 05/04/2009.

-- Exam 4 will be made available 11:00 a.m. on 05/04/2009 and must be completed no later than 11:00 A.M. 05/11/2009.

## ***INTERACTION ASSIGNMENTS***

The Mid-Term Interaction Assignment is based on Supreme Court decisions found at [www.oyez.org](http://www.oyez.org). There is a link for this assignment at the bottom of the course home page.

The Final Interactive Assignment is based on the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct. There is a link for this assignment at the bottom of the course home page.

## ***STUDENT CONDUCT***

The terms and provisions of the current South Suburban College Catalog are hereby incorporated by reference into this course outline and made a part of this document. Specifically, the terms and provisions of the Student Codes of Conduct contained in the current South Suburban College Catalog are hereby incorporated by reference into this course outline and made a part of this document. Please familiarize yourself with the Student Codes of Conduct and adhere to them at all times.

This syllabus is not a contract or offer to contract. The instructor, paralegal coordinator, department chair, dean and/or other school administrators reserve the right to change information contained herein without notice when circumstances warrant such action.