

## Syllabus Format

**Department:** Division of Library and Information Science

**Course Number and Title:** LIS 254 Legal Research

**Bulletin Description:** [25 words maximum]

This course will expose students to more complex legal research problems such as researching corporate and securities law; patent prosecution, international and foreign law research.

**Prerequisite(s):** None

**Co-requisite(s):** None

### Course Objectives:

Understand the basics of the American legal system; understand legal citations; be able to search for and locate case law by subject, by citation, by Key Number and Headnotes, and by full text searching in a variety of online databases; be able to use citators (Shepard's and KeyCite); be able to search for and locate secondary legal authorities, including treatises, hornbooks, law review and other journal articles, restatements, ALRs, and legal encyclopedias; be able to search for and locate federal and state statutes and related legislative histories; be able to compile a federal legislative history; be able to search for and locate federal administrative law materials, including rules and regulations, presidential materials, and agency decisions; be able to use Lexis and Westlaw to conduct legal and factual research in a cost effective manner.

### Program Goals and Outcomes:

6A) Understand the fundamentals of quantitative and qualitative research methods, including central research findings and research literature of the field, and the principles and methods used to assess the actual and potential value of new research.

### Units of Instruction:

#### 1. Introduction and Overview

- Introductions
- Course details and expectations
- Types of law libraries
- Sources of law
- Types of law
- Legal authorities and their characteristics
  - Constitutions, statutes, regulations, cases
- Court opinions and important common law doctrines
- Process of legal research
- Handling a research project
  - Getting started
  - Doing the research
  - Updating and keeping current
  - Stopping
- Methods of legal research

- Basic legal citation

## 2. Electronic Legal Research

- Introduction to Lexis and Westlaw
- Introduction to alternative electronic sources
- Cost effective searching

## 3. Types of source

- Types of sources
  - Encyclopedias
  - Treatises
  - ALRs
  - Restatements
  - Uniform and Model Acts
  - Periodicals
  - Looseleaves (print and online)
  - Journals and newspapers
- Print sources
  - Locating respected sources
    - Library guides
    - Catalogs
    - Recommendations
    - Additional “finding aids,” e.g., Svengalis, Looseleaf Services in Print, etc.
  - Using the sources
    - Index
    - Table of contents
    - Updating (pocket parts and supplements)
- Online sources and usage
  - Lexis and Westlaw
    - Browsing; searching by topic
  - Index to Legal Periodicals (WilsonWeb)
  - HeinOnline

## 4. Secondary Sources

## 5. Case Law Research

- Structure of courts (federal and state)
- Jurisdiction
- Reporters
  - Federal and state
  - Official and unofficial
  - Unpublished decisions
- Process and progress of publication (slip opinions, advance sheets, etc.)
- Finding cases
  - By citation or party name

- By subject/index – the digest system
- Full text searching
- Internet searching
- Other sources
  - Fastcase
  - Loislaw
  - Bloomberg Law
- Updating
  - Shepard's
  - KeyCite

## 6. Citators

- Continuation of previous class

## 7. Statutes and Legislation

- Legislative process
- Publication process
  - Public Laws – Slip Laws
  - Session Laws – Statutes at Large
- Codification
  - Process
  - Official vs. unofficial
- Sources
  - THOMAS
  - FDsys (formerly GPO Access)
  - Westlaw
  - Lexis
  - HeinOnline
- Research process
  - Index
  - Tables
  - Full text searching
  - Updating

## 8. Legislative History

- The pieces
  - Committee Reports
  - Sponsor statements
  - Floor debates
  - Drafts and amendments
  - Committee hearings
  - Presidential signing statements
- Compiled legislative histories
  - HeinOnline
  - LLSDC
  - Law reviews
- USCCAN

- Sources
  - THOMAS
  - GPOAccess/FDsys
  - Lexis and Westlaw

## 9. Legislative History

## 10. Administrative Law Research

- Administrative law primer
- Agencies
- Regulations
  - Federal Register
  - Code of Federal Regulations
- Finding regulations
- Updating regulations
- Tracking regulatory activity

### **Bibliography:**

*Basic Legal Research* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), Amy E. Sloan (“Sloan”); *Basic Legal Research Workbook* (4th Edition), Amy E. Sloan and Steven D. Schwinn (“Workbook”).  
*Principles of Legal Research* (Successor to *How to Find the Law*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition), Kent C. Olson.  
*The Bluebook, A Uniform System of Citation* (19<sup>th</sup> Edition).

### **New York State Education Department Requirements**

#### 1. Contact Hours – 30 hours

Comprised of the following:

- Periodic announcements/discussion posts by the instructor
- Lecture (online or face to face)
- Monitoring group discussions
- Reviewing assignments
- Advising on semester projects
- Email interaction

#### 2. Supplementary Hours – 120 hours

Comprised of the following:

- Assigned reading
- Weekly assignments (individual and group)
- Research for semester projects
- Presentations (online or face to face)
- Academic Service-Learning projects (where appropriate)