

**Legal Methods**  
Spring 2025 REQ 7170

**SYLLABUS**

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The professor reserves the right to amend or change Syllabus at any time as needed throughout the semester. This document is a helpful guide intended to give students an overview of the course. Please take the time to read and review this document in detail.

**Learning Objectives**

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Critically evaluate their first semester and self-assess to identify strengths and areas of improvement for law school and beyond.
2. Master fundamental skills required for success in law school and beyond, including critical reading, note taking, and independent legal analysis.
3. Read fact patterns, identify legal issues, articulate applicable rules, and uncover and apply the facts of the fact pattern to the elements of the rule in essay form.
4. Develop systematic problem-solving strategies to approaching multiple-choice questions.

**Course Materials**

Students are not required to purchase a textbook for this course. All required materials will be available on the class Canvas page. I will be utilizing materials from various sources, including BarBri. Note that many of the BarBri materials we'll use adopt a classroom-law-firm model of instruction.

There are a lot of additional resources available to address different aspects of success in law school (e.g., mental health, time management, legal writing, etc.). Throughout the course, I will recommend resources that I believe are helpful as supplementary material. Additionally, practicing applying the law is vital to your success in law school. The focus of this course is on the underlying skills, rather than the specific doctrine of the other course you're taking. As such, I recommend the following resources to prepare for your doctrinal classes:

- BarBri 1L Mastery
- ASP Portal – Access to:
  - West Supplements
  - CALI
  - Practice Exams (posted closer to final exams)
- ASP Resource Library (Waterman 304)

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**Office Hours**

I am a resource for you this semester and beyond, so please don't hesitate to come talk to me. Because there are so many different 1L class schedules across the cohorts, my office hours are by appointment. You can use the following link to schedule an appointment: <https://calendly.com/dsmith-179/30min>.

**Grading**

Legal Methods is a Pass/Fail course. Your grade in this course will be based on the following:

- Good-faith completion of homework assignments;
- Good-faith completion of the Midterm Assessment;
- Good-faith completion of the Final Assessment;
- Class participation, including, but not limited to, participating in in-class activities; and
- Compliance with the Attendance Policy, including, but not limited to, attending required meetings.

**Homework Assignments**

Throughout the course, you will complete and submit homework assignments. Homework assignments will be submitted through Canvas and will be due before class on the date listed in the course schedule. I do not accept late work.

In order to pass the course, you must satisfactorily complete at least 85% of the homework assignments. "Satisfactorily complete" means that you have finished the assignment in good-faith and submitted it by the deadline. You will receive a "0" for an assignment if it does not comply with this requirement.

**Attendance Policy**<sup>1</sup>

Attendance is mandatory for this class. Presence also requires being prepared and professional. If you are not prepared for class or if you act in a manner that violates proper classroom etiquette, the professor reserves the right to count you as absent for the class. Proper classroom etiquette includes, but is not limited to:

- Being ready to participate at the start of class
- Not speaking out of turn

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<sup>1</sup> See Academic Regulations II(A)(1).

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- Using laptops for only class-related tasks
- Being patient
- Collaborating with others

You will be counted as absent if you are not present within 10 minutes of the scheduled start time of the class. You will be considered late if you arrive to class after attendance is taken, but prior to 10 minutes after the scheduled start time of class. If you are late twice, that counts as one absence. If a student has more than two (2) absences, that student will fail the course due to absence. You will be responsible for all material covered in any class you miss and may be required to complete make-up work at the professor's discretion.

**Communication**

VLGS email and Canvas announcements will be the primary means of communications in this course, so I expect that you will check your email and announcements at least once a day during the school week. You should adjust your Canvas settings to receive announcements via email. My transmission of class-related announcements and/or emails shall constitute notice, and you are therefore responsible for the information, whether you read it or not.

**Weather/Emergencies**

If school is closed for the time of our scheduled class, I will either notify you that class for that day will be virtual through Teams or we will schedule a separate makeup class. If the school is open, but travel is not safe from where you are coming, please exercise your discretion.

**Plagiarism**

You are cautioned to comply with the requirements of the Honor Code by avoiding plagiarism and other misconduct as provided in the student handbook. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, or collaboration, please ask. Plagiarism is an Honor Code violation that will result in an F in the course and a referral to the Vice Dean for Students for further action.

**Title IX**

Our school is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex. Sexual misconduct – including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking – is also prohibited at our school.

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Our school encourages anyone experiencing sexual misconduct to talk to someone about what happened, so they can get the support they need and so our school can respond appropriately. If you wish to speak about an incident of sexual misconduct, want more information about filing a report, or have questions about school policies and procedures, please contact our Title IX Coordinator: Jessica Durkis-Stokes (802-831-1274 / [jdurkisstokes@vermontlaw.edu](mailto:jdurkisstokes@vermontlaw.edu)).

Our school is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, and therefore it cannot guarantee the confidentiality of a report, but it will consider a request for confidentiality and respect it to the extent possible. Your professors and other VLGS employees (including TAs) are also required to report incidents of sexual misconduct and thus cannot guarantee confidentiality. This includes any mention of sexual misconduct that you might make in your written work. Employees must provide our Title IX coordinator with relevant details such as the names of those involved in the incident.

**Accommodations for Disabilities**

If you believe you qualify for and would like to request an accommodation, you should review the VLGS Disability Policy: <https://www.vermontlaw.edu/community/students/academic-success/accommodations>. On that webpage, there is also an online form you can complete and upload your supporting documentation. If you have questions, please make an appointment with the Vice Dean for Students. Please note that requests made within two weeks of a midterm or a final examination may not be granted in time.

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**Course Overview**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>HOMEWORK DUE <u>BEFORE</u> CLASS</b>
January 14	Class One: Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class Overview</li> <li>• Learning from Last Semester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Syllabus (no submission)</li> <li>• Submit Self Reflection</li> </ul>
January 16	Class Two: <i>In re Hayworth</i> Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit Diagnostic Assessment</li> </ul>
January 21	Class Three: Case Reading & Briefing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading speed &amp; comprehension quiz</li> <li>• Reading &amp; briefing best practices</li> <li>• Discuss assigned cases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit case briefs for <i>PNC Bank Corp. v. Stamos</i> and <i>Dacunzo v. Edgye</i>.</li> </ul>
January 23	Class Four: Case Reading & Briefing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class <i>Blue v. Blue</i> exercise</li> </ul>	
January 28	Class Five: Note Taking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss assigned cases</li> <li>• Note taking exercise</li> <li>• Note taking best practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read and brief <i>Gardner v. Gardner</i> and <i>Hagerty v. Hagerty</i> (no submission)</li> </ul>
January 30	Class Six: Legal Problem Solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing research questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit Pre Client-Interview Exercise</li> <li>• Read <i>Ketterle v. Ketterle &amp; Uniform Marriage and Divorce Act § 307</i> (no submission)</li> <li>• Schedule Goal Setting Meeting</li> </ul>
February 4	Class Seven: Drafting a Legal Memorandum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of best practices for memo writing (bar-exam style)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit Outline Accountability Check One</li> </ul>
February 6	<b>NO CLASS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend using this time to complete the Legal Memorandum Exercise (untimed)</li> </ul>	
February 11	Class Eight: Drafting a Legal Memorandum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Legal Memorandum Exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit Legal Memorandum Exercise</li> </ul>
February 13	Class Nine: Multiple Choice Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class mini-assessment</li> <li>• Systematic problem solving</li> </ul>	
February 18	Class Ten: Multiple Choice Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class exercise</li> </ul>	
February 20	Class Eleven: Midterm Assessment Preview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Midterm Assessment Preview as practice for Midterm Assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit Multiple-Choice Strategies Exercise</li> <li>• Read &amp; Outline Midterm Assessment Preview (no submission)</li> </ul>

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February 25	<b>NO CLASS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommend using time to complete the Midterm Assessment (untimed)</li> </ul>	
February 27	Class Twelve: Midterm Assessment Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-class exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit Midterm Assessment</li> </ul>
March 3-7	<b>CAMPUS CLOSED – SPRING BREAK</b>	
March 11	Class Fourteen: Advanced Problem Solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-class exercise</li> </ul>	
March 13	<b>NO CLASS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend 1L Academic Advising Fair</li> </ul>	
March 18	Class Seventeen: Academic Advising & Multistate Performance Test (“MPT”) Primer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic Advising Overview</li> <li>Overview of MPT &amp; best practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read MPT Primer (no submission)</li> </ul>
March 20	<b>NO CLASS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommend using time to complete MPT and update outlines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule meeting with academic advisor (no Canvas portal/submission – coordinate with your advisor)</li> </ul>
March 25	<b>NO CLASS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommend using time to complete MPT and update outlines</li> </ul>	
March 27	Class Nineteen: MPT Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review MPT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit MPT</li> <li>Submit Outline Accountability Check Two</li> </ul>
April 1	Class Twenty: Multiple Choice Skill Refresher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule Reflection Meeting</li> </ul>
April 3	Class Twenty-One: Essay Exam Skill Refresher	
April 8	<b>NO CLASS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommend using this time to complete the Final Assessment (untimed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit at least 3 questions for April 10 Review Session</li> </ul>
April 10	Class Twenty-Two: Professor Review Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit at least 3 questions for April 15 Review Session</li> </ul>
April 15	Class Twenty-Three: Professor Review Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit at least 3 questions for April 17 Review Session</li> </ul>
April 17	Class Twenty-Four: Professor Review Session	
April 22	Class Twenty-Five: Final Assessment Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit Final Assessment</li> </ul>
April 24	Class Twenty-Six: Wrapping Up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Course evaluations</li> <li>Final Thoughts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit ASP Mentor Meeting Certification</li> <li>Submit Professor Meeting Certification</li> </ul>