INTRODUCTION TO U.S. LAW
and
LEGAL PRACTICE
SYLLABUS
*Subject to slight modification

August 11 – 22, 2014

Monday through Friday
9:00 – 12:00, 1:00 – 2:00
and as indicated

Sections:

Section 1  Professor Irene Ayers
Vanderbilt Hall (VH) 204

Section 2  Professor Mary Holland
Vanderbilt Hall (VH) 210

Section 3  Professor Hon. Gerald Lebovits
Vanderbilt Hall (VH) 220

Purpose: The purpose of this course is to ensure that you have the tools you need to thrive during your LL.M. year at NYU Law School. The faculty will give you an overview of the U.S. legal system, explore evolving lines of cases and teach you the basics of U.S. legal research, writing and analysis. By providing you with a broad overview and a detailed look at a line of cases, we highlight the methods and background you will need to succeed, especially during the first semester. As part of the course, we will watch and discuss the movie, “Hot Coffee,” a documentary about contentious issues in the U.S. civil justice system. You will also get practice taking and evaluating law school exams.

Early Assignment & Class Requirements: Please do the first assignment before class on Monday, August 11. See “Week 1 – Homework” on page 2 for details. You must attend class, be prepared to discuss the readings and submit assigned written work to the course website. Please bring your laptop to class each day.

Required Textbook: We will use a custom textbook, the *NYU Graduate Lawyering Book*, published by Wolters Kluwer, as our primary text. The textbook will be available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore. Page references in the syllabus refer to that text. In addition to the text, each section requires you to read specific cases that are available in a course reader in the NYU bookstore and on our course website. The faculty will also post additional materials on the course’s website.

Examination: You must take and pass the final exam, a two-hour exam, on August 22, 2014. It will be “open book,” meaning you may bring your notes and cases and consult them during the exam but you may not consult the internet. You will type your answers on your computer and upload them to a server. You will receive a score on your midterm test, but the score will not count towards your final pass/fail grade. Faculty will post the top three final exams from each section on the course website.
Recommendations: We recommend that you buy a small booklet, *The U.S. Constitution and Fascinating Facts About It*. The booklet will be useful for our discussion of the Constitution. Please buy or be prepared to use a library copy of *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation, Harvard Law Review Association*.

We also recommend three texts as supplements to the course: *Whose Monet? An Introduction to the American Legal System*, by John Humbach, Wolters Kluwer; *Law 101: Everything You Need to Know about American Law*, by Jay M. Feinman, Oxford University Press; and *Open Book: Succeeding on Exams from the First Day of Law School*, by Barry Friedman and John C.P. Goldberg, Wolters Kluwer. These books are available for purchase on the internet or at the NYU Bookstore.

Credit: This course fulfills two credits of American Legal Studies and one credit for Legal Research, Writing and Analysis towards the New York State Bar Exam. They do not count towards the LL.M. degree.

Assessment: You will get the results of a multiple-choice assessment on Friday, August 15, and we will review them in class. You will also receive a designation of “exceeds expectations,” “meets expectations,” or “below expectations” on your final essay examination. The faculty expects to give roughly 70% of each class “meets expectations,” 15% “exceeds expectations” and 15% “below expectations.” The top three essays in each section will be posted to the section folder on the course website without name or exam number as samples of work that exceeded expectations.

Graduate Lawyering I: Introduction to U.S. Law and Legal Practice are prerequisites for Graduate Lawyering I. There are 1-credit and 2-credit sections of the course available in the fall semester, and 1-credit sections available in January. Graduate Lawyering I is a graded course which carries credit towards the New York State bar exam and the LL.M. degree.

Schedule: The course meets every day from 9:00 – 12:00 and 1:00 – 2:00, with slight variations noted below with an **.

Week 1:

**Homework to complete before class on Monday, August 11:**
Read the U.S. Constitution
Read *Graduate Lawyering Book*, chapters 1, 2 and 4

**Monday, August 11**
Morning:
- “No Vehicles in the Park” In-class Exercise (Powerpoint presentation)
- How to Read and Brief a Case (Powerpoint presentation)
Afternoon:
- Brief and review *Everett v. Rogers*, Appendix C

**Homework for Tuesday August 12:**
Read *Graduate Lawyering*, chapters 5 and 6
Prepare a written brief of *Everett v. Rogers*; bring four copies to class.
Tuesday, August 12
Morning
• Small group discussions of *Everett v. Rogers* briefs and hypotheticals based on this case
• Overview of the U.S. Constitution
• Overview of the U.S. Legal System (Powerpoint presentation)
Afternoon:
• Sources of Authority and What Legal Citations Mean

**Homework for Wednesday, August 13:**
Read *Graduate Lawyering*, chapter 3 on civil litigation and chapters 16-19 on standards of review. Prepare a summary statement about the Broward matter, Exercise 3-1; bring four copies to class.

Wednesday, August 13
Morning:
• Overview of the U.S. Legal System, continued (Powerpoint presentation)
• Anatomy of the Civil Litigation Process (Powerpoint presentation)
Afternoon:
• Introduction to Legal Research

**Homework for Thursday, August 14:**
Read chapters 10-14 on legal research. Prepare an analysis supporting Broward’s or Warren’s position in Exercise 6-4 or 6-5 for class discussion.

Thursday, August 14
Morning:
• Discussion of Broward and Warren arguments based on *Everett* case (Appendix C)
Afternoon:
• Introduction to Legal Research, continued

**Homework for Friday, August 15:**
Study material covered during the week.

Friday, August 15
9:00 – 10:00 multiple choice midterm exam
10:15-1:00
• exam review
• background on thematic line of cases
• in-class research exercise related to the section’s cases
2:00 – 3:30 “Hot Coffee” in Tishman Auditorium
3:30-4:45 Panel Discussion about film

**Homework for Monday, August 18:**
Brief cases assigned by professor and be prepared for class discussion.
Complete the research and writing project started in class Friday and submit to course website by 9:00 a.m. Monday, August 18
Read your section’s line of cases.

Week 2:
Monday, August 18
Morning:
• Discuss line of cases relevant to section
Afternoon:
• Discuss line of cases relevant to section

Homework for Tuesday, August 19:
Brief cases assigned by professor and be prepared for class discussion.

Tuesday, August 19
Morning:
• Discuss line of cases relevant to section
Afternoon:
• Discuss line of cases relevant to section

Homework for Wednesday, August 20:
Brief cases assigned by professor and be prepared for class discussion.
Read Appendix K on exam-taking skills.

Wednesday, August 20
9:00-11:00 Practice Essay Writing; submit to course website
11:15-12:00 Review three sample essays in class
1:00-2:00 Exam Workshop by Teaching Assistants

Homework for Thursday, August 21:
Review course and identify questions.

Thursday, August 21
Morning:
• Discuss practice essay exam
• Wrap-up question and answer session
Afternoon:
• Questions and Answers
• Online course evaluation

Homework for Friday, August 22:
Prepare for examination.

Friday, August 22
10:00-12:00 Final Exam