

Summer 2022
INSC 536: User Legal Research
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Class Meetings: Thursday, 6:30 – 9:10 p.m.
ZOOM Course ID/Link: <https://tennessee.zoom.us/j/93400499935>



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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed for non-law librarians that are apt to get legal questions. As legal issues become more prevalent in our daily lives, library patrons are increasingly turning to librarians for assistance in addressing their own questions and problems. This course will provide an introduction to the United States legal system and the legal research resources available to the general public as well as some premium sources that some libraries, corporations, or businesses might provide. Students will develop basic competencies in conducting legal research necessary or useful for many library positions.

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

Students who complete this course will be able to demonstrate an understanding of

- Basic primary and secondary legal research sources, both in print and online
- The structure of the U.S. legal system and weight of authorities
- How to find court opinions, statutes, regulations, court rules, and secondary resources using both paid and free resources
- How to effectively create a research strategy for specific areas of law
- How to determine the currency and authoritative nature of online resources
- How to create a legal research guide using LibGuides

COURSE DESIGN

This course is designed based on a hybrid of the flipped approach. The “flipped approach” is a pedagogical framework in which students are introduced to the learning material before class, with classroom time then being used to deepen understanding through discussion with peers and problem-solving activities facilitated by instructors. The most effective way to master legal research skills is by working through several hypothetical problems together, which makes the “flipped approach” an ideal pedagogy.

For the flipped approach to be effective, students must be prepared for class. The instructor will lecture for 40 minutes at the beginning of the class. Then, students will work through hypotheticals in groups of 2 or 3. After 60 minutes of group work, the instructor will ask groups to explain the legal research process they used to work through the hypotheticals in their groups.

The instructor will also incorporate guest speakers throughout the course. The guest speakers will give students a glimpse into their jobs as court, law firm, and public law librarians.

REQUIRED TEXT

There is no textbook for this course. All required class readings and instructional materials will be available online and listed in the weekly Modules of our Canvas course site.

COMMUNICATION

We are required to communicate with you through your UTK e-mail address. If you prefer to use another address, consult the [OIT Helpdesk](#) to obtain directions for forwarding your UTK mail to your preferred address if you don't wish to check both accounts.

COMPUTING REQUIREMENTS AND RESOURCES

You must have adequate computing skills, including but not limited to the use of word processing, Web browsers, e-mail, listservs, Canvas, and Zoom software. You must learn how to submit your assignments using Canvas. The [Office of Information Technology \(OIT\)](#) provides training classes in using varied technologies for students at no charge (advance registration is required).

You must obtain a UT e-mail account and subscribe to the SIS student listserv. In addition, you must have the PowerPoint Reader or the regular PowerPoint software installed on your computer to download the lecture notes from Canvas.

Please review the SIS Technology Introduction website for help getting started with the tools you'll need in the program: <https://sis.utk.edu/techintro/>. For assistance with technical and computing issues, contact the OIT HelpDesk by phone at (865) 974-9900, using the [Contact Form](#), or at the [Walk-in HelpDesk](#).

LEARNERS EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to:

- Attend class
- Be prepared for class and actively participate in class by asking and answering questions and contributing to the class discussion
- Respect the opinions of others
- Monitor your progress and reach out to your instructor if you need help
- Complete assignments on time

INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS

Your instructor will be responsible for:

- Attending every class period and arriving on time; being present during office hours
- Being well-prepared to teach each class
- Treating students with respect
- Providing a classroom atmosphere that encourages learning and respect for diversity opinions (including thoughts that differ from the instructor's)
- Grading fairly and returning your assignments on time with feedback on your progress

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance is necessary and critical to your success in class. Expectations are for you to attend class through Zoom and be prepared to participate in class discussions and class exercises. The assigned reading should be completed before the start of class.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

“The chancellor (or appointed representative) may officially close or suspend selected activities of the university because of extreme weather conditions. When a decision to close is made, information is distributed to the campus community, shared with local media, and posted on the front page at <http://utk.edu>. SIS will cancel classes when UT is closed. Please check the SIS student listserv (UTKSIS-L@LISTSERV.UTK.EDU) for messages about closing.

DISABILITIES THAT MAY IMPEDE LEARNING

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact [Student Disability Services](#) in 2227 Dunford Hall at 865-974-6087, or by video relay at 865-622-6566 to coordinate reasonable academic accommodations.

CIVILITY

Civility is genuine respect and regard for others: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability, and courteousness. Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community. Our community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other's well-being and have a shared interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all community members and their points of view are valued and respected. Affirming the value of each member of the university community, the campus asks that all its members adhere to the principles of civility and community adopted by the campus: <http://civility.utk.edu/>.

CCI DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The College of Communication and Information recognizes that a college diverse in its people, curricula, scholarship, research, and creative activities expands opportunities for intellectual inquiry and engagement, helps students develop critical thinking skills, and prepares students for social and civic responsibilities. All members of the College benefit from diversity and the quality of learning, research, scholarship and creative activities is enhanced by a climate of inclusion, understanding and

appreciation of differences and the full range of human experience. As a result, the College is committed to diversity and equal opportunity, and it recognizes that it must represent the diversity inherent in American society. The College is acutely aware that diversity and fairness are foundations that unite the College's faculty, staff, students, and the larger communication and information community.

INSTRUCTOR STATUS AS A TITLE IX MANDATORY REPORTER

University of Tennessee faculty are committed to supporting our students and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. Please be aware that if you choose to confide in a faculty member regarding an issue of sexual misconduct, dating violence, or stalking, we are obligated to inform the University's Title IX Coordinator, who can assist you in connecting with all possible resources both on- and off-campus. If you would like to speak with someone confidentially, the Student Counseling Center (865-974-2196) and the Student Health Center (865-974-3135) are both confidential resources. For additional resources and information, visit titleix.utk.edu.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students should be familiar and maintain their *Academic Integrity* described in <https://hilltopics.utk.edu/academics/>, p. 15 as: "*Study, preparation and presentation should involve at all times the student's own work, unless it has been clearly specified that work is to be a team effort. Academic honesty requires that the student present his or her own work in all academic projects, including tests, papers, homework, and class presentation. When incorporating the work of other scholars and writers into a project, the student must accurately cite the source of that work.*"

Students should abide by the **Honor Statement** (<https://hilltopics.utk.edu/student-code-of-conduct/> Section X. Honor Statement): "*As a student of the University, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity.*"

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism in any of its several forms is intolerable, and attention to matters of documentation in all written work is expected and required. Inadvertence, alleged lack of understanding, or avowed ignorance of the various types of plagiarism are not acceptable excuses.

Specific examples of plagiarism are:

1. Copying without proper documentation (quotation marks and a citation) written or spoken words, phrases, or sentences from any source;
2. Summarizing without proper documentation (usually a citation) ideas from another source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge);
3. Borrowing facts, statistics, graphs, pictorial representations, or phrases without acknowledging the source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge);
4. Collaborating on a graded assignment without the instructor's approval;
5. Submitting work, either in whole or in part, created by a professional service and used without attribution (e.g., paper, speech, bibliography, or photograph).

Students who may be unsure of the nature of plagiarism should consult the instructor or a guide for writing research reports. (Additional resources are available at <http://www.lib.utk.edu/instruction/plagiarism>.) Infractions of academic integrity are penalized according to the severity of the infraction but **may include a course grade of "F."**

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

This table provides a brief summary of assignment names, due dates, and grade distribution. A fuller description of each assignment follows the table.

Assignment	Points	Due Date
Research Exercises	30 (10 points for each research exercises)	Week 3, 5 & Week 7
Final Research Exercise	30	Week 8
Presentation of News Article	20	Throughout the course
Class Participation	20	Throughout the course
TOTAL	100	

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

- Research Exercises
Students will be assigned homework on weeks 3, 5, 7, and 8.
- Presentation of News Article
On week 8, each student will give an 8-10 minute presentation of an news article. Students will need to find related legal resources, statistical sources, etc. mentioned in the article and discuss their legal research process during the presentation. Please send me a link to your news article by July 21, 2022, and I will post a link to everyone's article on Canvas.

DUE DATES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments should be submitted to the "assignments" area of Canvas. Assignments will be posted to Canvas at the end of class (around 9:00 p.m.) and due the following Tuesday by noon. Assignments submitted after the due date will receive feedback, but will only be eligible for half-credit.

INCOMPLETES

Based on the adopted University of Tennessee-Knoxville and SIS policy, a grade of *I* (Incomplete) is reserved for emergencies that prevent the student from completing the course on time. Incompletes are granted only under "the most unusual of circumstances" and solely at the discretion of the instructor. Plan your semester's course of study carefully to ensure sufficient time to complete the required work.

For students who simply "disappear" without contacting the instructor and without completing the required form, an "F" is submitted.

EVALUATION

Semester grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A	≥90	(4 quality points per semester hour) superior performance.
B+	88-89.75	(3.5 quality points per semester hour) better than satisfactory performance.
B	80-87.75	(3 quality points per semester hour) satisfactory performance.
C+	78-79.75	(2.5 quality points per semester hour) less than satisfactory performance.
C	70-77.75	(2 quality points per semester hour) performance well below the standard expected of graduate students.
D	60-69.75	(1 quality point per semester hour) clearly unsatisfactory performance and cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements.
F	59.75≥	(no quality points) extremely unsatisfactory performance and cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements.
I		(no quality points) a temporary grade indicating that the student has performed satisfactorily in the course but, due to unforeseen circumstances, has been unable to finish all requirements. An I is not given to enable a student to do additional work to raise a deficient grade. The instructor, in consultation with the student, decides the terms for the removal of the I, including the time limit for removal. If the I is not removed within one calendar year, the grade will be changed to an F. The course will not be counted in the cumulative grade point average until a final grade is assigned. No student may graduate with an I on the record.
S/NC		(carries credit hours, but no quality points) S is equivalent to a grade of B or better, and NC means no credit earned. A grade of Satisfactory/No Credit is allowed only where indicated in the course description in the <i>Graduate Catalog</i> . The number of Satisfactory/No Credit courses in a student's program is limited to one-fourth of the total credit hours required.
P/NP		(carries credit hours, but no quality points) P indicates progress toward the completion of a thesis or dissertation. NP indicates no progress or inadequate progress.
W		(carries no credit hours or quality points) indicates that the student officially withdrew from the course.

COURSE EVALUATION

You will be invited to evaluate the course at the end of the term. Please participate in this valuable process. We also invite your comments throughout the course and read all comments, suggestions, and recommendations.

MSIS PROGRAM OUTCOMES

It is our vision to provide a quality educational program, and for students to have the very best educational experience possible. By the end of their time in the MSIS program, each student should be able to:

1. Describe and discuss the processes of creation, organization, distribution, storage, access, retrieval, management, use, and preservation of information.
2. Describe and discuss the nature of leadership and management in the information professions and the importance of participation in the global information society.
3. Apply the general principles, values, and ethical standards of providing information services in a variety of settings and for diverse populations.
4. Comply with the changing responsibilities of the information professional in a culturally diverse and networked global society.

5. Identify critical professional issues in a variety of organizational, cultural, societal, disciplinary, transdisciplinary, and historical contexts.
6. Analyze and apply standards or policies related to the processes of creation, organization, distribution, storage, access, retrieval, management, use or preservation of information.
7. Explain the changing nature of information, information needs, and information behavior.
8. Assess and implement information technologies, systems, sources, and services that serve users effectively and efficiently.
9. Analyze research and apply it to information practice.

Assignments: Descriptions, Due Dates, and Program Outcomes for SLC

This table identifies the MSIS Program Outcome(s) addressed in course assignment(s):

Assignment	MSIS Program Outcome
Secondary Sources Exercise	Outcome 1, 8
Statutes, and Case Law Exercise	Outcome 9
Final Research Exercise	Outcome 9
Reflective Exercise	Outcome 1
News Article	Outcome 1, 9

COURSE SCHEDULE

Class Schedule	Class Prep: Readings	In-Class Topics	Assignments
Week 1 (6/09/2022)		Course Introduction & Law Librarianship Discussion	No Assignment
Week 2 (6/16/2022)	Review materials under Week 2 on Canvas	The Research Process & Background and Analysis; Emily McCutcheon , Research Librarian, Belmont University College of Law	No Assignment
Week 3 (6/23/2022)	Review materials under Week 3 on Canvas	Secondary Sources	Secondary Sources Exercise
Week 4 (6/30/2022)	Review materials under Week 4 on Canvas	Statutes and Legislative Information	No Assignment
(7/07/2022)	No Class	No Class	No Class
Week 5 (7/14/2022)	Review materials under Week 5 on Canvas	Case Law/Citators	Statutes and Case Law Exercise

Week 6 (7/21/2022)	Review materials under Week 6 on Canvas	Low Cost and Free Resources Research; Heather Holmes , Assistant Law Librarian, Harris County Law Library	No Assignment
Week 7 (7/28/2022)	Review materials under Week 7 on Canvas	Administrative Law; Kristin Nelson , Senior Law Librarian and Diversity & Inclusion Council Executive Director, National Agricultural Library United States Department of Agriculture	Reflective Exercise
Week 8 (8/4/2022)		News Article Presentations	Final Research Exercise

DISCLAIMER

Please be aware revisions may be made to this syllabus over the course of the semester, and as such, the content contained within may be subject to change.