

**McLennan**  
C O M M U N I T Y  
**COLLEGE**

WACO, TEXAS

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**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
**AND**  
**INSTRUCTOR PLAN**

**INTRODUCTION TO PARALEGAL STUDIES**

**LGLA 1313-01**

**DONNA K. DENDY**

**NOTE: This is a 16-week course.**

**NOTE: This is an In Person/Blended course.**

**COVID 19 Notice:**

McLennan Community College is committed to providing you with every resource you need to reach your academic goals. We are also concerned for your safety. We are working through COVID-19 guidelines to make sure we offer a safe environment for you and our faculty. This will include smaller class sizes to manage social distancing and proper cleaning techniques. You will have the advantage of a physical classroom experience but may also need to work part of the time online as we adjust to limited classroom capacity. This will also allow us the flexibility to move online if so directed by federal, state and/or local COVID 19 guidelines. Faculty and staff are preparing now to ensure that you have the best experience in the midst of these uncertain times.

## INTRODUCTION TO PARALEGAL STUDIES

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### **Course Description:**

1. Introduces the roles and overlapping functions of lawyers, legal assistants, legal secretaries, and other legal support staff.
2. Covers the various specializations within the practice of law, the structure of law firms, and the sources of employment in law firms and elsewhere;
3. Discusses legal professionalism;
4. Teaches the primary ethics governing the practice of law and outlines the duties a legal assistant may perform under adequate supervision of an attorney and avoidance of unauthorized practice of law; and
5. Introduces sources of American law, the court system, alternative dispute resolution, fundamental legal concepts, corporate law and government regulations.

### **Prerequisites and/or Corequisites:**

Co-requisite – INRW 0402.

### **Course Notes and Instructor Recommendations:**

Success will depend upon student acquisition and development of analytical, communication, reading, and speaking skills. **Good writing skills are essential. The student must strive to following the rules of English grammar and punctuation** in the preparation of legal documents. The Tentative Schedule contains all of the reading and work assignments for the semester along with dates due.

- **Time outside of class.** Students need to realize that time is required outside of class to read the reading assignments and to complete various other assignments.
- **Deadlines are important.** Deadlines are just that “deadlines.” The students need to make sure they read the Tentative Schedule to know when deadlines are scheduled. The students need to organize their time to meet these deadlines.
- **Study for tests.** Students need to set aside time to study for the quizzes and tests given in this class because this group of grades makes up 20% of the final grade.

### **Instructor Information:**

Instructor Name: Donna K. Dendy  
MCC E-mail: ddendy@mclennan.edu  
Office Phone Number: (254) 299-8238 (leave a message)  
Office Location: BTB 224

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Office/Teacher Conference Hours: Mondays - 30 minutes before and after class period

Other Instruction Information:

### **Required Text & Materials:**

Title: *Paralegal Today: The Legal Team at Work*

Author: Roger LeRoy Miller & Mary Meinzinger Urisko

Edition: 6th

Publisher: Delmar

ISBN: 13:978-1-4390-5701-8

**MCC Bookstore Website:** <http://www.mclennan.edu/bookstore/>

### **Student Support/Resources:**

MCC provides a variety of services to support student success in the classroom and in your academic pursuits to include counseling, tutors, technology help desk, advising, financial aid, etc. A listing of these and the many other services available to our students is available at <http://www.mclennan.edu/campus-resource-guide/>

College personnel recognize that food, housing, and transportation are essential for student success. If you are having trouble securing these resources, we encourage you to contact a success coach by calling (254) 299-8226. Students can visit the Completion Center Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. to meet with a success coach and receive additional resources and support to help reach academic and personal goals. Paulanne's Pantry (MCC's food pantry) is open 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., Monday-Friday, without an appointment. The Completion Center and pantry are located on the Second Floor of the Student Services Center (SSC).

### **MCC Foundation Emergency Grant Fund:**

Unanticipated expenses, such as car repairs, medical bills, housing, or job loss can affect us all. Should an unexpected expense arise, the MCC Foundation has an emergency grant fund that may be able to assist you. Please go to <https://www.mclennan.edu/foundation/scholarships-and-resources/emergencygrant.html> to find out more about the emergency grant. The application can be found [here](https://www.mclennan.edu/foundation/docs/Emergency_Grant_Application.pdf) ([https://www.mclennan.edu/foundation/docs/Emergency\\_Grant\\_Application.pdf](https://www.mclennan.edu/foundation/docs/Emergency_Grant_Application.pdf)).

### **Minimum Technical Skills:**

Students should have basic computer skills, knowledge of word processing software, and a basic understanding of how to use search engines and common web browsers.

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### **Backup Plan for Technology:**

In the event MCC's technology systems are down, you will be contacted/notified through your MCC student email address. Please note that all assignments and activities will be due on the date specified in the Instructor Plan, unless otherwise noted by the instructor.

**\* [Click Here for the Minimum System Requirements to Utilize MCC's D2L|Brightspace](https://www.mclennan.edu/center-for-teaching-and-learning/Faculty%20and%20Staff%20Commons/requirements.html)**  
(<https://www.mclennan.edu/center-for-teaching-and-learning/Faculty%20and%20Staff%20Commons/requirements.html>)

Click on the link above for information on the minimum system requirements needed to reliably access your courses in MCC's D2L|Brightspace learning management system.

### **Email Policy:**

McLennan Community College would like to remind you of the policy (<http://www.mclennan.edu/employees/policy-manual/docs/E-XXXI-B.pdf>) regarding college email. All students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to use their McLennan email addresses when conducting college business.

A student's McLennan email address is the preferred email address that college employees should use for official college information or business. Students are expected to read and, if needed, respond in a timely manner to college emails.

### **Instructional Uses of Email:**

Faculty members can determine classroom use of email or electronic communications. Faculty should expect and encourage students to check the college email on a regular basis. Faculty should inform students in the course syllabus if another communication method is to be used and of any special or unusual expectations for electronic communications.

If a faculty member prefers not to communicate by email with her/his students, it should be reflected in the course syllabus and information should be provided for the preferred form of communication.

### **Email on Mobile Devices:**

The College recommends that you set up your mobile device to receive McLennan emails.

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### **Forwarding Emails:**

You may forward the emails that come to your McLennan address to alternate email addresses; however, the College will not be held responsible for emails forwarded to an alternate address that may become lost or placed in junk or spam filters.

### **Methods of Teaching and Learning:**

Lecture, discussion groups, group projects, student performances/presentations, written report/papers, exams, and quizzes.

### **Course Objectives and/or Competencies:**

1. Develop a productive approach to the study of law;
2. Identify the major institutions affecting the paralegal profession and their functions;
3. Explain the various definitions of a paralegal;
4. Assess the various sources of paralegal employment and how to seek employment from them;
5. Understand the economic factors affecting paralegal employment;
6. State the duties of a paralegal in areas of legal specialization;
7. Review facts affecting the workplace environment of the law office;
8. Describe and model personal conduct that leads to success within in the law office;
9. Review the systems approach to the practice of law;
10. Differentiate various areas of law;
11. Develop skills of legal terminology;
12. Identify legal concepts in the field of law;
13. Examine the major regulations affecting paralegals and how they affect paralegal functions;
14. Describe paralegal licensing and certification programs; and
15. Apply the standards for determining unethical attorney and paralegal conduct and how to avoid malpractice and unethical conduct.

### **Course Outline or Schedule:**

The lectures will cover eight (8) chapters in the textbook and an overview of three (3) additional chapters which are listed in the Course Syllabus given to each student. After the first introductory class period, two class sessions will be required to complete each chapter's subject matter. A major test will follow the complete of study of two or three chapters. During the semester, work assignments will be made at times appropriate and relevant to the topics introduced in class. Many will consist of research and writing assignments which will introduce students to the court system of our nation and the paralegal profession. The learning objectives included in each test or graded assignment will follow the objectives identified in the first page appearing before each textbook chapter the students will study.

This is a Tentative Schedule and is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class.

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### Course Schedule: Introduction of Paralegal Studies 1313.50

DATE	ACTIVITIES
Week 1 Introduction	Orientation to the class; read and discuss Syllabus Introduction to classroom learning: skills and attributes Mastering the text Learning in the classroom Computer benefits Online resources, such as WestLaw/Lexis Nexis Taking exams Legal profession changes <b>Assignment:</b> Read Preface, Introduction, and Chapter 1
Week 2 Chapter 1	What is a paralegal? Paralegal tasks, duties, and technology Paralegal education Substantive and procedural Law Statutory law and common law Paralegal certification and CLE Paralegal skills and attributes Computer skills and professionalism Future of the Paralegal profession <b>Assignments:</b> Complete class projects, Chapter 1, and read Chapter 2
Week 3 Chapter 2	Quiz over Introduction and Chapter 1 Career opportunities in the Paralegal profession Categories of employers Paralegal specialties Paralegal compensation and benefits Career planning Locating potential employers Skill marketing Career evaluations and options <b>Assignments:</b> Complete class projects, Chapter 2, and read Chapter 3
Week 4 Chapter 3	Quiz over Chapter 2 Law firm organization Law office management and personnel Employment policies Filing procedures in the law office Financial procedures, fees, trust accounts, and billing Client communications Law office culture and office politics

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	<b>Assignments:</b> Complete class projects, Chapter 3, and read Chapter 4
Week 5 Chapter 4	<b><i>Major Comprehensive Exam, Chapters 1 - 3</i></b> Regulation of attorneys: code and rules Regulatory entities Attorney ethics and Paralegal practices Confidentiality and attorney-client privilege Conflicts of interest Indirect regulation of Paralegals Texas Rules of Professional Conduct Handout: Texas Government Code, Preamble and Rules 1.01 through 8.05 <b>Assignments:</b> Work on class projects, Chapter 4, and read preamble to Texas Rules; continue to study Chapter 4
Week 6 Chapter 4	Unauthorized practice of law Tips for ethical conduct by Paralegals Fee splitting Giving legal opinions and advice Representing clients in court; limited exception to the prohibition Disclosure of Paralegal status Legal technicians and free-lancing Licensing: the controversy Class participation: Texas Rules and application <b>Assignments:</b> Work on class projects, Chapter 4, and read Chapter 5
Week 7 Chapter 5	Quiz over Chapter 4 What is the law? Civil Codes and Common Law Primary sources of American Law Case law (common law or "judge-made law") Doctrine of "Stare Decisis" Binding (or mandatory) authorities Persuasive precedents Remedies at law Remedies at equity Statutory law and common law <b>Assignments:</b> Work on class projects, continue study Chapter 5
Week 8 Chapter 5	Common law and the Paralegal Legal terminology: English, Latin Rules of citation Constitutional law, United States Code (USC) Federal Register

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	<p>Federal statutes and citations</p> <p>Federal Rules Decisions</p> <p>Preemption, Uniform law, and ordinances</p> <p>Administrative law, state administrative codes, federal regulatory codes (CFR)</p> <p>International law, treaties, conventions, and judicial comity</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b> Complete class projects, Chapter 5, and read Chapter 6</p>
<p>Week 9</p> <p>Chapter 6</p>	<p><b><i>Major Comprehensive Exam, Chapters 4 - 5</i></b></p> <p>Basic judicial requirements for filing suit</p> <p>Standing to sue</p> <p>Jurisdiction, in general</p> <p>Personal jurisdiction</p> <p>Jurisdiction over property</p> <p>Subject matter jurisdiction</p> <p>Venue, in general (distinguished from jurisdiction)</p> <p>Original and Appellate jurisdiction</p> <p>Federal jurisdiction: Federal question, diversity, and concurrent jurisdiction</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b> Work on class projects, continue study of Chapter 6</p>
<p>Week 10</p> <p>Chapter 6</p>	<p>Judicial procedures: State and Federal</p> <p>State Court systems</p> <p>Texas Court system</p> <p><i>Major Student Project: Texas Court System Practice Guide</i></p> <p>Trial courts</p> <p>Justice and municipal courts</p> <p>County Courts and Courts at Law</p> <p>District Courts</p> <p>Courts of Appeal, intermediate</p> <p>Highest Courts of Appeal</p> <p>Federal District Courts</p> <p>Federal Courts of Appeals</p> <p>Convergence of appeals in the circuits, American Federalism</p> <p>U.S. Supreme Court</p> <p>Alternative dispute resolution: resolution, negotiation, arbitration, and collaborative law</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b> Complete class projects, Chapter 6, read Chapter 11</p>
<p>Week 11</p> <p>Overview of Chapters 7-8</p>	<p>Quiz on Chapter 6</p> <p>Overview of Chapter 7 - Legal Research and Analysis</p> <p>Overview of Chapter 8 - Online Legal Research</p>
<p>Week 12</p>	<p>Overview of Chapter 9 - Legal Writing</p>



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Overview of Chapter 9	Written communications
Week 13 Chapter 11	Types of witnesses Interviewing witnesses Planning and conducting investigations Locating witnesses Investigation and Rules of Evidence Telephone Etiquette <b>Assignments:</b> Work on class projects, read Chapter 12
Week 14 Chapter 12	<b><i>Major Comprehensive Exam, Chapters 6 and 11</i></b> Preparing for Trial Pretrial tasks: witness list, exhibit lists, jury charge, jury instructions Motions in Limine Exhibits and demonstrative displays Trial Notebook Pretrial conference Jury Selection <i>Voir Dire</i> Challenges for cause Role of Paralegal during <i>Voir Dire</i> <b>Assignments:</b> Work on class projects, continue study, Chapter 12
Week 15 Chapter 12	Trial Opening statements Plaintiff's case Direct examination Cross, redirect, and recross Motion for Directed Verdict Defendant's Case Jury instructions and the verdict Post-trial motions Judgment Notwithstanding the Verdict (JNOV) Appellate briefs and oral arguments Final judgments (civil); abstracts, writs of execution and levy <b>Assignments:</b> Complete class projects, Chapter 12
Week 16	<b><i>Final Exam (comprehensive: all chapters)</i></b>

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### **Course Grading Information:**

The system of grading will be based on the following objective standards (no “curve” methods will be used);

A	=	90-100
B	=	80-89
C	=	70-79
D	=	60-69
F	=	Below 60

### **FINAL GRADE DETERMINATION:**

Final Exam	25%
Major (interim) Exams	35%
Quizzes (in class)	30%
Professional Grade	10%

The course grades will be calculated as follows:

Final Exam (25%) – Given on last day of class.

Major (interim) exams (35%) – There will be three (3) major exams.

Quizzes (30%) – Given in class at various times.

Professional Grade (10%) –

1. Cell phone 5 points deducted for use of phone during class.
2. Interruptions to class:
  - a. Leaving class & returning – 5 points deducted (please go to the restroom before class). Leaving class early without discussing the reason for leaving with the instructor will be counted as one-half (1/2) absence in the class.
  - b. Arriving late – 5 points deducted for each occurrence
  - c. Unexcused absence – 10 points deducted for each occurrence.
3. Laptops/IPads – May only be used for notetaking and research conducted by the instructor. If a student is found on email or surfing the Web, the student will lose the privilege of using the computer.

Detailed information regarding reading quizzes and major assignments during the semester is provided in the Course Syllabus distributed to each student. A grade of C or better in all required LGLA courses is a prerequisite to graduation with a Paralegal Studies Degree.

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### **Late Work, Attendance, and Make Up Work Policies:**

Homework assigned during one class period will be due **at the beginning of the next class period**. Reading assignments are given on the Tentative Schedule. You will need to be sure to read these assignments before coming to class in order to get the maximum information from each class period. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of the appropriate class (see Tentative Schedule). Weekly assignments will not be accepted if they are more than **one and one-half (1 ½) week late**.

There will be three major tests and one comprehensive final. If a student misses one of the tests, the final test grade will be used as the grade for the missed test as well as the final test grade. If the student takes all three tests, the final grade can count not only as the final test grade, but may also be substituted for the lowest major test grade, if such is to the student's advantage. No makeup tests or finals are allowed. If the student makes below 70 on any major test, the student must meet with the instructor to discuss the score. It is the student's responsibility to schedule a time for that meeting. The student will be informed of the necessity of such conferences by notation on the test paper returned to the student.

**If you are absent when an assignment is done in class, you will need to see the Instructor immediately. You will have 1 ½ weeks to complete missed exercises or exams. Ten points will be deducted from the grade when taken late. No work will be accepted after 1 ½ week from the return from the absence.**

### **Student Behavioral Expectations or Conduct Policy:**

The following are the behavioral expectations which will provide a more conclusive learning environment for all students in the classroom and will provide opportunities for successful completion of this course.

- All cell phones are to be turned off and put out of sight. If you are expecting an emergency call, the phone needs to be placed on the Instructor's table at the front of the room. Using the cell phone in class will result in 5 points being deducted from the attendance (professional) grade.
- All other electronic devices must be turned off and placed out of sight. If the student does not turn off the device, the student will be asked to leave the classroom and 5 points will be deducted from the attendance grade.

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- The use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco products is not allowed in the classroom.
- Student should not attend class with the smell of or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Take care of your personal business before class starts. Leaving and entering the classroom disrupts the learning environment.
- Expression of opinions and questions on classroom discussions are encouraged.
- Mutual respect of others' opinions is expected.
- Loud, raucous behavior in the classroom is not acceptable. If after being asked to be quiet the student does not, he/she will be asked to leave the room. Repeated occurrences will require visits to Student Development for disciplinary action.
- Major exams will be returned to students for review after being graded. These exams must be returned to the Instructor by the end of the class period. **Ten (10) points will be deducted from the student's final exam grade for each day that the exam is not returned (including the date that the exam was not turned in). After four (4) days, the student will receive an "F" in the course.**

**\* [Click Here for the MCC Academic Integrity Statement](http://www.mclennan.edu/academic-integrity)**

([www.mclennan.edu/academic-integrity](http://www.mclennan.edu/academic-integrity))

The link above will provide you with information about academic integrity, dishonesty, and cheating.

**\* [Click Here for the MCC Attendance/Absences Policy](https://www.mclennan.edu/highlander-guide/policies.html)**

(<https://www.mclennan.edu/highlander-guide/policies.html>)

Click on the link above for the college policies on attendance and absences. Your instructor may have guidelines specific to this course.

**Accommodations/ADA Statement**

Any student who is a qualified individual with a disability may request reasonable accommodations to assist with providing equal access to educational opportunities. Students should contact the Accommodations Coordinator as soon as possible to provide documentation and make necessary arrangements. Once that process is completed, appropriate verification will be provided to the student and instructor. Please note that instructors are not required to provide

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classroom accommodations to students until appropriate verification has been provided by the Accommodations Coordinator. Instructors should not provide accommodations unless approved by the Accommodations Coordinator. For additional information, please visit [mclennan.edu/disability](http://mclennan.edu/disability).

Students with questions or who require assistance with disabilities involving physical, classroom, or testing accommodations should contact:

[disabilities@mclennan.edu](mailto:disabilities@mclennan.edu)

254-299-8122

Room 319, Student Services Center

**\* Click Here for more information about Title IX**

**([www.mclennan.edu/titleix](http://www.mclennan.edu/titleix))**

We care about your safety, and value an environment where students and instructors can successfully teach and learn together. If you or someone you know experiences unwelcomed behavior, we are here to help. Individuals who would like to report an incident of sexual misconduct are encouraged to immediately contact the Title IX Coordinator at [titleix@mclennan.edu](mailto:titleix@mclennan.edu) or by calling Dr. Drew Canham (Vice President for Student Success) at 299-8645. Individuals also may contact the MCC Police Department at 299-8911 or the MCC Student Counseling Center at MCC by calling 299-8210. The MCC Student Counseling Center is a confidential resource for students. Any student or employee may report sexual harassment anonymously by visiting the following website: <http://www.lighthouse-services.com/mclennan/>.

McLennan's Title IX webpage (<http://www.mclennan.edu/titleix/>) contains more information about definitions, reporting, confidentiality, resources, and what to do if you or someone you know is a victim of sexual misconduct, gender-based violence or the crimes of rape, acquaintance rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, dating violence or domestic violence.

*\* You will need to access each link separately through your Web browser (for example: Internet Explorer, Mozilla, Chrome, or Safari) to print each link's information.*