

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
Mastering Legal Education – section 1

Fall 2025

Professor Jennifer E. Spreng

Contact:

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Lesar Law Building Room 212

Class Logistics:

Mondays from 1:30-2:20 p.m.
Room 204

Office hours:

For now, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:15 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. with some unannounced exceptions.
I am also happy to see students by appointment at other times.

Please email for a specific appointment to make sure you are able to see me!

TA Reviews:

Usually Wednesdays at approximately 10:20 a.m.
Room TBA but usually Room 204

Vital note: The first meeting of this class is Monday, August 25 at 1:30 p.m.!
Your first assignments are due Friday, August 22 at 11:59 p.m.

Mastering Legal Education is “Bootcamp for Law School”! You will learn to “learn like a lawyer” and use legal reasoning to solve problems with principles from your Torts class. You will adopt a study process, Prepare, Perform, and Improve (PPI), for high-impact learning and legal work. You will hone your legal reasoning and communication capacities and follow systematic methods for solving legal problems, communicating the solutions in writing, and evaluating the quality of your work that you can use in any class. Then, you will implement these strategies to improve your learning in all your courses in time for examinations. But have no fear, the Mastering Legal Education community of professors, Taylor Mattis Fellows in “Study Groups,” and Teaching Assistants in “Wednesday Reviews” will guide you through it all. Mastering Legal Education will be an intense two-month workout, but by the end, you will be able to maximize your learning and become the successful law student you want to be!

Treat this syllabus like a court’s scheduling order.
You are responsible for knowing and complying with this syllabus,
especially assignment deadlines!

CLASS INFORMATION AND POLICIES

1. **Course Objectives.** The objectives of this course are:

- Think, act, communicate and learn like a lawyer.
- Organize and manage legal work in a law school setting.
- Identify legal issues in legal problems and devise effective strategies for solving those problems.
- Analyze and synthesize law from legal authorities.
- Identify facts relevant to legal principles applicable to legal problems.
- Apply legal principles to relevant facts to solve legal problems.
- Communicate legal reasoning and solutions to legal problems effectively in objective writing.
- Evaluate your work and the work of others effectively from the tools taught in the class.
- Develop and implement productive learning and examination preparation strategies.
- Employ productive academic and professional behaviors to succeed in law school and law practice.
- Take initial steps to plan your entry to the legal profession.

2. **Books and materials.** We will use the following in this class:

- Vincent R. Johnson & Chenglin Liu, *Studies in American Tort Law* (7th ed. 2022) (this is your Torts coursebook but please bring it to class).
- Supplementary materials you will find on our D2L course management site.

2. **Attendance.** Our class meets once a week on Mondays from 1:30 p.m. to 2:20 p.m. As specified in the Rules of the Southern Illinois University School of Law, “regular attendance to class meetings in all courses is expected and required of all students in accordance with the rule to be announced by the professor at the beginning of each course. Attendance will be taken in class and attendance records will be kept. Violation of this rule shall subject the student to penalties”

It is your responsibility to ensure that you sign the attendance sheet during class. You should also note that the School of Law Honor Code states that it is academic misconduct to sign another student's name to an attendance sheet for a class that the other student did not attend. Students may have no more than a maximum of four absences (partial or total) for any reason. The attendance requirement is not subject to modification by a professor, nor may a professor excuse an absence. If the absences allowed under this provision have been exhausted, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs may grant leave and relief from the regular attendance requirement in extraordinary circumstances, including but not limited to: (1) military service; (2) representing the law school at a moot court, mock trial, law review, or official function; (3) jury duty; (4) religious observances; (5) the birth of a child; (6) the death of an immediate family member to include grandparents; (7) major non-elective surgery or a prolonged hospital stay; or (8) to comply with federal or state antidiscrimination laws, other applicable laws, or SIU policies.

3. Grades in Mastering Legal Education: Required Activities. You will receive a grade of either "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" in Mastering Legal Education, a 0.5 credit-hour course, depending in part on your performance with both required and scored activities. "Satisfactory" performance in a required activity evinces a good, conscientious effort to perform and/or produce a high-quality work product and improve at both learning, reasoning, and communicating like a lawyer. To receive a grade of "satisfactory" in Mastering Legal Education you must complete several required activities satisfactorily:

a. Attend and participate in class. You must attend class consistent with the School of Law Rules, specifically Rules III.5(f)-(g) and participate in class once there. Under Rules III.5(f)-(g) and the needs of this course, you may miss only one (1) Mastering Legal Education class. To "participate in class," you must have submitted your Class Preparation Assignment, be prepared for class, have all necessary materials, and contribute to class discussion and activities appropriately or you may be counted absent for purposes of this class attendance requirement. If you do not have a copy of an assignment or materials required for a particular Mastering Legal Education class for use in that class when needed, you may be unprepared for that class.

b. Attend and participate in all Study Group and individual meetings with Taylor Mattis Fellows. In Mastering Legal Education, you will be a member of a “Study Group” and one of the Taylor Mattis Fellows will lead your group. Your group and your Fellow will meet during several weeks of the term to discuss study strategies, examination preparation, peer-to-peer advising, law school life, and other matters.

You must attend all “Study Group” meetings with your Taylor Mattis Fellow during the term and any individual meetings related to this course. Attendance will be kept. You will connect with your Fellow at Orientation and receive information about the Study Group and individual meeting schedule soon afterwards from your Fellow and on our D2L site.

Your Taylor Mattis Fellow will be glad to meet with your Study Group at other times and any student individually. If you must miss a Study Group meeting, you must file a motion to extend time to make the meeting and then schedule to make it up with your Taylor Mattis Fellow.

c. Attend one Outlining Workshop. After Mid-terms, you must attend one of five Outlining Workshops, though you may and are strongly encouraged, of course, to attend as many as you wish! These Workshops will address planning for examination preparation, different forms of outlining and structuring the law, developing effective strategies for making and deploying examination preparation materials. In general, these will occur weekly on Wednesdays at approximately 10:15 a.m. and will start in Week Nine, right after Mid-term examinations. The precise schedule and coverage will be available on D2L and in other announcements after the term begins.

d. Career Placement Activity. You will also participate in a Career Placement Activity with Career Placement Director Casey Parker. Details will be available on D2L and from Director Parker.

e. Individual Meetings. I welcome opportunities to meet with you in-person or on Zoom about Mastering Legal Education, improving your learning in other classes, or other matters of interest or concern to you. I am often in the office and available on Zoom. Email me for an appointment or drop by the office.

I may also ask to meet with you on other occasions, and these meetings are required. In my role as an Academic Success professor, I will provide you with many opportunities to improve your legal reasoning and learning skills. You should feel free to ask for individual guidance for improvement even if I may help you further. Please take advantage of all opportunities anyone at Simmons Law School can provide to help you maximize your law school success!

f. **Take the Syllabus Quiz successfully.** You must take the Syllabus Quiz prior to the day of the first class meeting, which is **Monday, August 24, 2025**. You must receive a score of at least ninety (90) percent. You may take the quiz as many times as you wish.

4. **Grades in Mastering Legal Education: Scored Activities.** Along with completing required activities in paragraph 3 above, to receive a grade of “satisfactory” in Mastering Legal Education **you must also earn eight (8) of ten (10) points for the class by completing scored activities satisfactorily.**

“Satisfactory” performance in a scored activity evinces a **good, conscientious effort** to perform and/or produce a high-quality work product and improve at both learning and reasoning like a lawyer.

Scored activities are written assignments, and there are three types: Admit Slips, Class Preparation Assignments, and Other activities. Points for each type are below and indicated with the Assignments on D2L. Consult D2L for correct due dates for all scored activities. In rare instances, Professionalism could also result in point deductions, or other point additions or deductions could occur for other reasons.

a. Admit Slips (1 point each). Admit slips require that you chart and write answers to written problems based on legal norms and other directions you receive in class. You must turn satisfactory Admit Slip responses timely.

In our Monday classes, you will learn methods to “chart” the law and facts of the legal problems in our Admit Slips and thereby learn both to solve those problems and communicate those solutions in writing. **On Wednesdays, usually at approximately 10:20 a.m., our Teaching Assistants will hold Admit Slip review sessions** to discuss the problems, suggest strategies for solving them and writing your answers, and explain aspects of the law or reasoning related to the topics in the problems. Though these sessions are not required, they will help you prepare satisfactory answers to Admit Slips. Then, **Admit Slips are due at 11:59 p.m. on Fridays in weeks they are due.**

b. Class Preparation Assignment (0.5 points each). For each class, you will submit a “Class Preparation Assignment,” which will be due on Sundays at 11:59 p.m. on weeks when they are due. These assignments usually have two parts. The first part is a short self-assessment of your prior week’s Admit Slip based on sample answers that will post after that Admit Slip’s due date/time on Saturday. The second part is an activity to get you started on the Admit Slip due the coming week.

c. Other activities (either 0.5 or 1 point(s) each). These activities include revision of the study schedule you will create early in the term and a self-assessment of your Simulated Mid-term and have various point totals associated.

d. Professionalism. Professionalism, including professional participation in class and completion of activities to support your learning where performance dictates, is required in this class. Because I assume all law students arrive at law school with a sense of professionalism, you will not earn points for

professionalism, but in rare instances, I could deduct points accordingly, solely and entirely in my discretion, for instances of unprofessional conduct. Hopefully such events will not occur this term.

Professionalism's roots are the lawyer's understanding that this profession holds itself to the highest ethical and professional standards. For this grade category, "professionalism" is "student professionalism," defined as follows:

Conduct whereby lawyers, in the ethical service of others, take personal responsibility to: (1) ensure they are competent in their understanding of the law; (2) pay close attention to detail in their work product and use of language; (3) simultaneously handle multiple tasks when necessary in a timely manner so as to meet obligations; (4) dress and groom in a manner consistent with their workplace culture; (5) treat others with respect, even in disagreement; (6) put the interests of clients before their own; and (7) protect the rule of law.

To avoid any loss of points, do the following: actively read and prepare for each class session; arrive to every class on time and ready to participate; be respectful and courteous to everyone in the classroom; do not talk, text, or use cell phones or other electronic devices during lecture except as such use may be directly related to the class; make every effort to improve your skills as the semester progresses, including completing supplementary activities for the purpose; and thoughtfully engage in discussion if called upon in the class.

Successful completion of the Syllabus Quiz on D2L will help avoid any related loss of points.

e. Other. I retain the discretion to add or deduct points/credit related to professionalism, participation, preparedness, attendance, quizzes, extra credit and activities not otherwise indicated on this syllabus.

5. Assignment deadlines. See our D2L site and its assignment dropboxes for activity due dates. Each assignment sheet also lists the items you must post in the D2L assignment drobox by the deadline to receive full credit.

a. Late submission. Do not turn in written assignments late. See the chart below for the consequences of turning in assignments after the due date and time as indicated in the chart below. The only exceptions to this policy require that you file a Motion for Extension of Time as explained in subsections (b) and (c) below.

POINTS AVAILABLE FOR ASSIGNMENT	POINTS DEDUCTED IF UP TO 24 HOURS LATE*
0.5 points	0.25 points
1 point	0.5 points

***For credit, you must also include and sign (electronically) this statement with your submission:**

“On my honor, I certify that I have not consulted any Sample Answer or rubric for this assignment and will not do so until I submit it.”

The Honor Code is in effect as to this certification. Submission of the assignment will constitute certification that the above statement is true.

b. Motions for Extension of Time. In rare circumstances, I might extend your time to turn in a response to an in-class activity or out-of-class assignment or to attend a class or meeting with or without a penalty but only if you file a Motion for Extension of Time with grounds showing good cause for the exception with a proposed Order, both clearly stating relief requested.

I am most likely to grant your motion if you anticipate a life event that will interfere with your complying with a due date or activity and file the Motion for Extension of Time prior to the assignment due date or in-class activity. Otherwise, assume I will only rarely grant Motions for Extension of Time and probably never if the proposed due date is on or after the next assignment due date unless COVID-19 has interfered with your ability to meet the deadline.

c. Process for moving for an extension of time. Forms for a Motion for Extension of Time and proposed Order are available on D2L in the Syllabus and

Supporting Materials Module. To move for an extension of time, you must file both documents by emailing them to me. **You must state grounds that show good cause to extend time and/or for any other relief you request.** The forms apply primarily to late submission of written work, but you may modify them to make analogous requests. You have the responsibility of bringing your motion to my attention and including in the proposed order the provisions you wish me to sign. I am not responsible for responding to motions I overlooked, did not receive, or inadvertently lost.

For credit, you must also include and sign this statement with your motion:

“On my honor, I certify that I have not consulted any Sample Answer or rubric for this assignment and will not do so until I submit it.”

The Honor Code is in effect as to this certification. Submission of the assignment will constitute certification that the above statement is true.

6. Course Management System. Our course materials, class reading and other assignments, sign-up sheets, and assignment submission dropboxes will appear on our Desire2Learn course management site (D2L). **I will not accept submissions via email except in unusual situations.**

7. Teaching Assistants and Wednesday Reviews. Several Teaching Assistants will support your learning in Mastering Legal Education. Each of you will have one Teaching Assistant assigned to support your work, give feedback and other guidance, and make sure you receive necessary assistance with skill development. Those assignments will appear on D2L. Others of my Teaching Assistants may lead Admit Slip review sessions or Outlining Workshops. You may approach any of my Teaching Assistants from this section or Torts for assistance. They are happy to help you!

The Teaching Assistants from both sections of Mastering Legal Education will hold review sessions, usually on Wednesdays. You will find more information about our Teaching Assistants in the “Teaching Assistants and Wednesday Review sessions” page in the Start Here module in D2L. The schedule for review sessions is in the “Syllabus and Administration” module in D2L.

8. Taylor Mattis Fellows and Study Groups. Taylor Mattis Fellows are carefully selected upper-class students who serve as Study Group leaders and mentors for first-year students. Taylor Mattis Fellows have demonstrated high capacity for maximizing their learning in law school with proven methods and mindsets they want to share and model to others. You will see the list of Taylor Mattis Fellows on our D2L Site

I will assign each of you to a Study Group with a particular Taylor Mattis Fellow as your leader shortly after the beginning of the term. That Fellow will lead your Study Group meetings this term, meet with you outside of class, assist you with examination preparation strategies, and serve as your peer mentor for questions and concerns about law school and being a law student.

See “Taylor Mattis Fellows and Study Groups,” a page in the “Start Here” module on D2L as well as other D2L postings for more information about the Fellows. The schedule for Study Groups is there as well as in the “Syllabus and Administration” module in D2L.

9. American Bar Association (ABA) Standard 310. Under the ABA Standards for accrediting law schools, a credit hour is, “an amount of work that reasonably approximates not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and two hours of out-of-class student work per week for fifteen weeks, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time.”

For a one-half-credit course such as Mastering Legal Education, the Standard means a student must attend at least **twenty-five (25) minutes** of class each week (one classroom hour = fifty (50) minutes). The ABA also requires that students in spend **at least one hour** per week on out-of-class work. Note that these are minimum requirements. You may assume you will spend much more than this bare minimum doing assignments for Mastering Legal Education given the nature and importance of the subject.

10. Law School Honor Code, University Code of Conduct and assistance from other persons or artificial intelligence tools on class assignments. Both the Honor Code and the Code of Conduct apply and are in effect in this class. Read both documents carefully and make sure you comply with both at all times.

Submitting plagiarized work or any other form of work not your own, including work produced in whole or in part with artificial intelligence, regardless of a student's purpose or intent, is potentially subject to serious sanctions as are other academic, honor code, and conduct code offenses. Do not consult others or obtain written materials from any other person on any work product you turn in, including other lawyers, other students, *or any artificial intelligence tool such as ChatGPT*, unless I give you permission. You may always consult our course teaching assistants or I for help on assignments.

If you violate the policy stated above, you will receive a failing grade on that assignment. You also may be found in violation of the Honor Code, which can lead to serious penalties, including expulsion. An Honor Code investigation must also be reported to the Bar Examiners for any state where you apply for membership, even if you are cleared of any violation, **which may put your eventual bar membership in jeopardy.**

If you have any questions regarding the Honor Code, Code of Conduct or either's application to any of your activities in this class or anything related to this policy, consult me. The following guidance may also be helpful:

- What you may do: You may discuss Admit Slips and Class Preparation Assignments and your answers **after you turn them in**. They are great study tools and useful for study group or paired discussions! You may consult teaching assistants, librarians, and me for questions about assignments, though we may not always be able to provide all help you might wish. You may ask for advice or clarify instructions on any assignment with a teaching assistant or me. You may sometimes consult teaching assistants and Taylor Mattis Fellows about other matters, and you may always ask me any questions you may have. The worst we can say is that the Honor Code forbids us to help you!
- What you may not do: You may not turn in work that is not your own. You may not discuss or collaborate on Admit Slips or other assignments until you turn them in. You may not discuss or collaborate on Class Preparation Assignments until you turn them in. **You may not read the written work of another student or permit another student to read your written work until after both of you have turned in the work**

in. The written product must be your own work; you may not copy another student's work and hand it in as your own. You may not seek assistance on any written assignment from anyone except me or a teaching assistant, and teaching assistants are neither obligated nor always permitted to provide assistance.

**THIS SYLLABUS IS A LIVING DOCUMENT AND IS
SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT MY SOLE DISCRETION**