

Law Practice Management - Law 587
Spring 2024
Tuesday & Thursday
3:00 – 4:15
Virtual

Martin Parsons
Assistant Professor of Practice
Cell: 217-418-5032
martin.parsons@siu.edu

Required Textbook:

The Experiential Guide to Law Practice Management: Opening and Operating Your Own Firm, Kramer & Nowak, Carolina Academic Press, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-5310-2465-9

Course Description: This course is designed to give students a comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of managing a successful law practice. It should equip them with the knowledge and skills to navigate the challenges of running a legal business while maintaining ethical standards and providing quality legal services.

Learning Objectives: By the end of this course, students will:

1. Understand the Business of Law:
 - Identify and comprehend the fundamental principles of law practice management as a business entity.
 - Recognize the financial and operational aspects unique to legal practice.
2. Client Management:
 - Develop skills in client communication, including effective client intake, engagement, and relationship management.
 - Understand strategies for addressing client expectations and resolving conflicts.
3. Legal Technology Integration:
 - Evaluate and adopt appropriate legal technologies to enhance law practice efficiency.
 - Demonstrate proficiency in using legal software for case management, billing, and document automation.
4. Time and Task Management:
 - Implement effective time and task management techniques for maximizing productivity.
 - Prioritize and delegate tasks efficiently within a legal practice setting.
5. Ethics and Professional Responsibility:
 - Explore ethical considerations related to law practice management.
 - Engage and consider non-dominant perspectives in the practice of law with respect and empathy.

6. Financial Management:

- Develop financial literacy related to law firm accounting, budgeting, and financial reporting.
- Create and manage a law firm budget, including billing and collection strategies.

7. Marketing and Business Development:

- Explore strategies for law firm marketing and client acquisition.
- Develop a basic understanding of branding, online presence, and networking for legal professionals.

8. Staff and Team Management:

- Learn effective leadership and management techniques for legal teams.
- Address issues related to staff development, motivation, and performance evaluation.

9. Risk Management:

- Identify potential risks and liabilities in law practice and develop risk management strategies.
- Understand insurance options and policies relevant to legal practice.

10. Professional Development:

- Explore ongoing professional development opportunities for legal practitioners.
- Understand the importance of staying informed about changes in the legal landscape and adapting to new trends.

Grading: The evaluated course work will consist of in-class assignments, outside of class written assignments, other exercises, and participation points. Each student will submit a Business Plan at the end of the semester, which will be graded. An Outline of the proposed Business Plan will be due around the semester's mid-point. No Final Examination.

Grades: Your final grade will be determined by your performance in the following percentages:

40% - Business Plan (**Due by Monday, May 6 at 4:30 p.m.**)

20% - Portfolio

10% - Time Logs

15% - Professionalism and Class Participation

15% - Final Presentation

Time Logs: It is essential to become comfortable keeping time logs if you want to operate a solo or small-firm law practice. Even if you charge fixed fees (i.e., not hourly billing), learning to keep track of your time is essential for reasons I will explain in class. Many lawyers fail to keep track of their time and try to reconstruct it right before billing the client. This is a disaster waiting to happen—for reasons that I will discuss in class. Do NOT do this.

You will be responsible for logging in everything you do for our class except attending the class sessions. Time logs must include time spent reading, writing, emailing your colleagues about matters related to your business plan, emailing me, performing research, etc. You must enter your time in six-minute increments. This means that if you spend only four minutes, you

round up the time to six minutes. If you spend 17 minutes, you round up the time to 18.

Please prepare your time logs on a computer and submit them to me weekly. I will base your grade for this assignment on your effort and professionalism in keeping track of your time and logging it and timely submission. Your grade will **not** be affected by how long any task took.

Please log the tasks using decimals. This means that one six-minute segment will be listed as 0.1 hours. Twelve minutes will be listed as 0.2 hours. (That is, each "0.1" hour is equal to six minutes.) Remember to round your time up to the next highest increment. This means that if you spent an hour and 10 minutes reading a particular assignment, log that in as 1.2 hours. (That is, "0.2" is a twelve-minute increment. You round up 10 minutes to 12 minutes and log it in as "0.2.") If this does not make sense, please let me know. I would be glad to give you additional examples.

Please also be specific about what each task is. If the task is reading, let me know what article you read. If the task is researching, tell me what you researched. Make your entries concise. One sentence is sufficient for each entry.

Sample posts for your time log:

5/31/15—Reviewed "Check List for Starting a Law Practice" (0.6 hours)

5/31/15—Corresponded with Professor Parsons re: time log assignment (0.1 hours)

Note 1: Bundle them together if you do a few quick things in one day (each takes less than six minutes). Example:

5/31/15—Entered time in the time log and wrote to Prof. Parsons to ask if I did it right (0.1 hours)

Note 2: If you were sending a bill to a client, you wouldn't write the entry as informally as the entry above.

Note 3: You should never charge clients for the time you spent working on your bill, but it's fine in our class to include the time you spent working on the time log!

Electronic methods (free):

<https://toggl.com/track/>

<https://clockify.me/>

PLEASE EMAIL ME EARLY IN OUR COURSE IF YOU ARE UNSURE ABOUT HOW TO PROCEED WITH THE TIME LOG!

Class Participation and Professionalism: I expect you to participate fully in all class discussions and small-group discussions. The rules of participation are simple: Don't be a gunner or a slacker. In other words, please don't dominate the conversation and don't fail to participate in it.

Professionalism means that you need to act like a professional. This means you must (a) be respectful of everyone in the class, (b) send me emails that contain appropriate punctuation, capitalization, and syntax and that don't look like texts or Facebook posts.

Professionalism also means you will not text, email, surf the Internet, shop online, look at Facebook, or use technology in class except when I ask you to use it. This includes cell phones, tablets, and laptops. Since this is a virtual class, monitoring this is more difficult than if we were in person. Note: If you have an emergency that requires you to monitor texts, emails, or phone calls during any particular class session, please notify me before that class.

Independent Work & Ban on Collaboration: You are not allowed to obtain help from any other person (including any other student) or generative artificial intelligence (including, but not limited to, ChatGPT) on any writing assignment in this course. (This does NOT include the Business Plan assignment.) This ban on collaboration includes obtaining written materials from any other person or generative artificial intelligence and communicating with others about an assignment. If you violate the prohibition on collaboration policy, you will receive a failing grade on that assignment. You also may be found in violation of the Honor Code, which can lead to severe penalties, including expulsion. An Honor Code investigation must also be reported to the Bar Examiners, even if you are cleared of any violation. If you are in doubt about how to proceed, ask me.

Attendance & Grading: Classes meet on Tuesday and Thursday from 3:00 to 4:15 via Teams video. I will take attendance in class and follow the School of Law's attendance policy. You are entitled to six (6) absences. **Unless prior arrangements are approved, more than six (6) absences will result in your withdrawal from the class or a grade reduction per School of Law Rules III.5(f)-(g).**

D2L: There is a D2L page for the course. You are automatically granted access to the D2L page because of your registration in this course.

Microsoft Teams: I use Teams Video for this course, not Zoom. There is a Teams group for this course. The links to join the weekly class sessions are found in the calendar of the course Team group. You should have received a calendar invitation to those weekly meetings. Changes in class meetings, assignments, discussions, and other essential material will be presented in the Teams group. It is your responsibility to check this group regularly. You can also download the Teams app on your phone.

Office Hours: Since this is a virtual class, I will not have office hours at the law school. I can meet by phone, virtually, or in person at my office in Carterville. You can schedule a meeting using my scheduling link: <https://calendly.com/lahq/student-meeting>

Class Schedule: My best current estimate of how we will proceed is the following. We may move more slowly than I project, so I have reserved time at the end to finish. *I reserve the right to change any aspect of the following. I will likely update this schedule at the end of each class.*

Week 1

- 1) **January 16** Is the Practice of Law a Business?
Assignment: Read Chapter 1
- 2) **January 18** The Business of Law Continued
Assignment: Complete and turn in Private Practice Suitability Exercise

Week 2

- 3) **January 23** Potential Partners and Naming
Assignment: Read Chapters 2 and 3
- 4) **January 25** Firm Naming In-Class Exercise
Assignment: Complete and turn in Naming Your Law Firm writing assignment by next class.

Week 3

- 5) **January 30** Business Entity Selection
Assignment: Read Chapter 4, 805 ILCS 10, 805 ILCS 180, and 805 ILCS 185
- 6) **February 1** Lawyer Compensation
Assignment: Read Chapter 5

Week 4

- 7) **February 6** Finances
Assignment: Read Chapter 6
- 8) **February 8** Business Plans
Assignment: Read assigned material on business plans. Turn in names of chosen law partner(s).

Week 5

- 9) **February 13** Practice Areas and Locations
Assignment: Read Chapter 7
- 10) **February 15** Practice Areas and Locations In-class Exercise. Work on business plans in your “firm.”
Assignment: Complete Week 5 assignment and bring to class.

Week 6

11) February 20 Types of Office Space

Assignment: Read Chapter 8

12) February 22 Guest Speaker

Assignment: Research the speaker's practice. Prepare questions for the speaker.
Complete reflection assignment due before the next class.

Week 7

13) February 27 Equipment and Organization

Assignment: Read Chapters 9 and 10

14) February 29 Technology

Assignment: Read assigned materials on technology.

Week 8

15) March 5 Fee Arrangements, Law Firm Accounting, and Trust Accounts

Assignment: Read Chapter 11, Illinois Rules on Trust Accounts, Illinois Rule 1.15 of the Rules of Professional Conduct

March 7 In-class discussion of practice areas and prices for class "firms."

Assignment: Turn in outline of business plan.

SPRING BREAK: March 9 to March 17

Week 9

16) March 19 Marketing

Assignment: Read Chapter 12

17) March 21 Guest Speaker

Assignment: Turn in blog post assignment.

Week 10

18) March 26 Hiring Personnel

Assignment: Read Chapter 13

19) March 28 Discuss Employee Handbooks and office processes.

Assignment: Complete week 10 checklist/process exercise.

Week 11

20) April 2 Client Relations – Potential Clients

Assignment: Read Chapters 14 and 15

21) April 4 Client Interview Role Play

Assignment: Complete Client Interview assignment before class on April 11th.

Week 12

22) April 9 Client Relations – Existing Clients

Assignment: Read Chapter 16

23) April 11 Class Presentations

Week 13

24) April 16 Fee Disputes, Grievances, and Malpractice

Assignment: Read Chapters 17, 18, 19, and 20

25) April 18 Class Presentations

Week of 14

26) April 23 Disasters

Assignment: Read Chapters 21 and 22

27) April 25 Finish Class Presentations

****The final Business Plan is due by Monday, May 6 at 4:30 p.m.**

OTHER IMPORTANT STUFF

UNIVERSITY POLICIES: Supplemental syllabus information from the University is contained in a separate document, posted under the Syllabus content folder on D2L, and incorporated herein by reference.

WORKLOAD EXPECTATIONS: NOTE that the amount of time you must spend preparing for each class is substantial. The American Bar Association standards for accrediting law schools contain a formula for calculating the amount of work that constitutes one credit hour.

According to ABA Standard 310(b)(1), *"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."* This is a 3-credit hour class that meets twice a week. Thus, the amount of assigned reading and out-of-class preparation should take you about 3 hours for each class session and 6 hours for the week. All told, applying the ABA standard to the number of credits offered for this class, you should plan to spend a total of 9 hours per week (3 in class and 6 preparing for class) on course-related work.

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarizing another's work, in whole or in part, is a violation of the Honor Code and can lead to serious penalties, including expulsion. An Honor Code investigation must also be reported to the Bar Examiners, even if you are cleared of any violation. The Honor Code defines plagiarism as *passing off another's ideas, words, or work as one's own, including written, oral, multimedia, or other work, either word for word or in substance unless the student author credits the original author and identifies the original author's work with quotation marks, footnotes, or other appropriate designation in such a way as to make clear the true author of the work.*

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES: We ask that you become familiar with **Emergency Preparedness @ SIU**. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, on the Emergency Preparedness @ SIU website, and through text and email alerts. To register for alerts, visit <http://emergency.siu.edu/>.

DISABILITY POLICY. SIU Carbondale is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible experience for all students with disabilities. Disability Support Services coordinates the implementation of accommodations. If you think you may be eligible for accommodations but have not yet obtained approval, please contact DSS immediately at 618-453-5738 or disabilityservices.siu.edu. You may request accommodations at any time, but timely requests help to ensure accommodations are in place when needed. Accommodations and services are determined through an interactive process with students and may involve consideration of specific course design and learning objectives in consultation with faculty. Please send approved accommodations to your faculty through the DSS online portal.

SALUKI CARES. The purpose of Saluki Cares is to develop, facilitate, and coordinate a university-wide program of care and support for students in any type of distress—physical,

emotional, financial, or personal. By working closely with faculty, staff, students, and their families, SIU will continue to display a culture of care and demonstrate to our students and their families that they are an important part of the community. For Information on Saluki Cares: (618) 453-2461, or siucares@siu.edu, <https://salukicare.siu.edu/>. Associate Dean Doug Lind (dlind@siu.edu, 618-453-8713) and Assistant Dean Judi Ray (judiray@siu.edu, 618-453-8135) are available at the School of Law to help students access university resources.

SAFETY AWARENESS FACTS AND EDUCATION Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: <http://safe.siu.edu>

Updated: **January 6, 2024**