

Community College of Rhode Island
Criminal Justice & Legal Studies Department

Basic Civil Procedure for Paralegals On-Campus Course Syllabus

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Required Text

Civil Procedure for R.I. Paralegals
By: Daniel J. Donovan, J.D. (First Edition)

Course Summary

This course is designed to introduce Paralegal Studies Majors to the legal concepts and the practical applications of civil litigation using a transactional approach to the Rules of Civil Procedure as used in the Federal and State Court systems. After an introduction to civil litigation, the role of the paralegal, and the court system, including the areas of personal and subject matter jurisdiction and remedies, the course will cover three main areas: (1) Pleadings; (2) Motions; and (3) Discovery. Grading for this course will be done through a combination of tests and a document drafting project consisting of complaints, answers, and interrogatories.

In the study of pleadings, the course will cover complaints, cross-claims, counterclaims, third party complaints, responsive pleadings (answers and replies), affirmative defenses, and Rule 12 dispositive motions. The discovery segment will deal with Interrogatories, Requests for Production, Requests for Admissions, Notice of Depositions, and Discovery Motions.

Course Objectives: The objective of this course is to make the Paralegal Studies Major thoroughly familiar with the rules and forms needed to assist an attorney in a litigation practice; to understand the difference between and the interplay of procedural rules and substantive law; to alert the students to the different procedural rules applicable in different court systems even within the same state; and to provide students with practical experience in transforming factual situations into legal documents on behalf of the law firm's clients.

Organization of the Course: The online version of Civil Procedure has been organized into four units consisting of two or three chapters from the textbook for each unit. Each unit has its own test.

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Course Information and Requirements

Blackboard Learn: As part of the course, we will be using a learning management system called Blackboard Learn. There is a website on Blackboard for this course, which has an e-mail system, a discussion board, video tutors, audio lecture files, a glossary, tests, and an assignment submission component. You will receive instructions for registering into Blackboard at the beginning of the semester.

Grading Policies: The final grade will be determined based upon the following:

Unit Tests: Four online tests (one for each unit) worth 75 points each - 300 points

Drafting Project: Five drafting assignments worth a total of 200 points

Total Possible Points (divide by 5 for grade average) = 500 points

Beginning with the Fall 2009 semester, CCRI is using a Plus/Minus Grading System as set out in the college's catalog.

Document Drafting Project: The document drafting project will present the student with two hypothetical situations. The first is the collection of an overdue promissory note. The second is a lawsuit involving the injuries to a child resulting from a dog bite from a neighbor's dog. These two hypothetical situations will be used as the basis for the drafting of five documents: two complaints, an answer, a third party complaint, and a set of interrogatories. These drafting assignments will not open up to students until we have completed the background information needed that is supplied in the first two units of the course. Students will have the opportunity to submit their draft of the document for review. I will then correct it and return it to the student for corrections. The grading will be done on the corrected document.

About the Instructor: Professor Daniel J. Donovan holds a law degree (Juris Doctor) from Rutgers Law School in New Jersey. Prior to law school, he received a degree in political science from Villanova University in Pennsylvania. He was admitted to practice as a lawyer in Rhode Island in 1972. He was involved in continuing legal education for lawyers for 12 years and authored several books and pamphlets for lawyers including "Title Searching in Rhode Island" and "R.I. Landlord & Tenant Law". Your instructor has taught at CCRI full time since 1989 teaching business law and paralegal studies courses, and had previously taught part-time at CCRI and other colleges. Your instructor is the author of five textbooks: Legal Research in Rhode Island, Survey of the Law of Property & Estates, Civil Procedure for R.I. Paralegals, Survey of RI Law of Torts, and Introduction to Paralegal Studies.

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Online Course Organization

Unit I:

Chapter One: Introduction to Civil Litigation

Chapter Two: Overview of A Civil Action

Unit II:

Chapter Three: The Role of the Paralegal in Civil Litigation

Chapter Four: Courts, Jurisdiction and Venue

Unit III:

Chapter Five: Remedies and Litigation Expenses

Chapter Six: Drafting Civil Litigation Documents

Chapter Seven: Commencing the Lawsuit

Unit IV:

Chapter Eight: Subsequent Pleadings and Motions

Chapter Nine: Discovery Procedures and Documents

Calculating Deadlines under the R.C.P.

Appendix: Timetable under the Rules of Civil Procedure (Superior & District Courts)

Please Note: Part I of the textbook contains the above chapters. Part II of the textbook contains sample documents to illustrate the format and the content of various pleadings, motions, and discovery documents. These documents should be reviewed in conjunction with the text material in Part I on particular documents. It would be beneficial to read through all of the documents in Part II in one sitting to get an understanding of how all the documents are linked together in the civil litigation process. Part III of the textbook includes selected Rules of Civil Procedure from the R.I. Superior Court. These rules are referred to in the chapters in Part I of the book and should also be read in conjunction with those chapters. I have underlined the most important parts of those rules for your convenience.