

WRITING, RESEARCH, AND TRIAL ADVOCACY

Spring 2026 – Day & Evening Classes

Director: Professor Paula Colby-Clements

EMAIL: pcolby@mslaw.edu

WEBSITE: <http://www.mslaw.edu/colbyclements/>

PHONE: 978.681.0800 (ext. 138)

TEXTS: (1) **The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation** (21st Edition)

(2) **Aspen Coursebook Series**. Students are required to purchase the bundled link that includes the textbook: Preparing for Practice: Legal Analysis and Writing in Law School's First Year (Second Edition) along with the Connected Quizzing.

Connected Quizzing

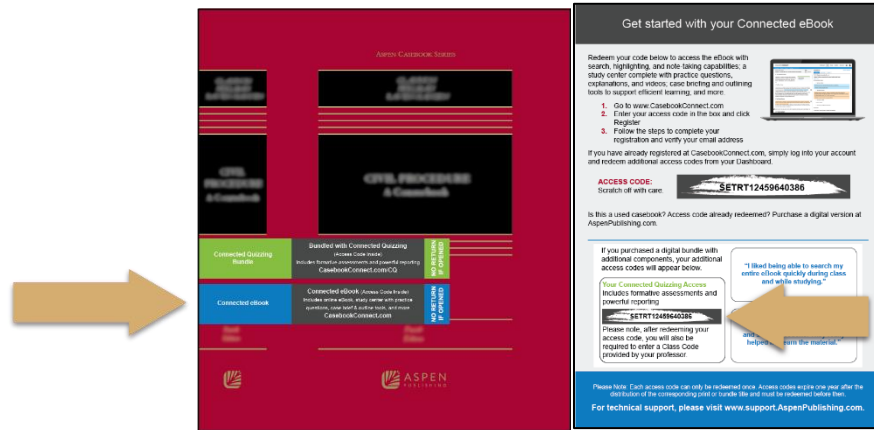
Connected Quizzing is a required component of this course. With Connected Quizzing, you'll take assigned Casebook Connect that will help you learn the course material and get detailed feedback to help ye in class.

Step 1: PURCHASING ACCESS

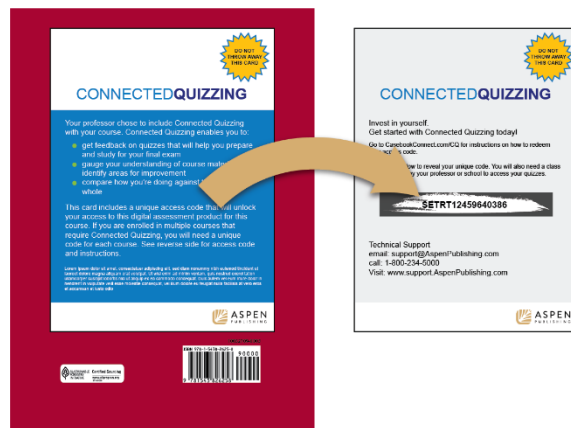
You have two ways to purchase Connected Quizzing:

1. **Print Book + CQ Bundle Option:** Purchase a bundle with a new print textbook for a discounted price. If you prefer the bundle option, the PRINT BUNDLE ISBN: 9798892078443
2. Your book will come bundled with a scratch-off sticker inside the front cover (shown below) or as an access card shrink-wrapped to the back cover of your textbook (**do not throw this code away**). Redeem this access code at www.CasebookConnect.com. **If your book does NOT come with a Connected Quizzing access code, you did not purchase the appropriate bundled product, and you will be required to purchase Connected Quizzing separately.**

a. Cover and scratch-off inside front cover:



b. Access card:



- 3. CQ Only Direct Purchase:** If you already purchased your textbook elsewhere, you can also purchase Connected Quizzing separately at www.AspenPublishing.com/CQ. Follow the instructions provided after completing your purchase to access Connected Quizzing on Casebook Connect.

Step 2: CLASS CODE

Once you have successfully purchased access or redeemed your access code, you will see Connected Quizzing on your dashboard when you log into your Casebook Connect account. You will then be prompted to enter a class code to connect with my class and see your assignments.

Enter Class Code: COLBY-207414

Helpful Information

[Watch a Tutorial Video](#)

[Download Quick Start Guide PDF](#)

[Request Technical Support](#)

For more information, visit www.CasebookConnect.com/CQ.

CLASS DAYS/TIMES: Monday & Wednesday 11:00-12:15 p.m., 1:00-2:15 p.m. & 9:00-10:20 p.m. (Students will be assigned a time slot and small group instructor which will be posted in the lobby by the first day of class).

SCOPE

In this course, you will be required to draft an inter-office memorandum to a senior attorney and a short memorandum in support of a motion to a court. You will prepare several drafts of each memorandum to allow you to refine your writing and editing skills. You will also argue a portion of a client's case in a mock trial court. At the end of the semester, you will feel confident submitting your final memoranda as writing samples to potential employers; you will also feel confident analyzing and advocating a client's cause. The course will have a final exam where you will need to draft an interoffice memo, and a client letter based on materials provided to you. This is very similar to the MPT writing component on the UBE.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to continue the development of students' legal writing skills as well as building critical reading skills, research skills, and oral advocacy skills. Specifically, students will continue to formulate written rules derived from legal authority, synthesize multiple legal authorities, work on refining IRAC, TRAC, CRAC, or CREAC, organize a written discussion, assess the value of cases as they pertain to a client's legal question, and advocate in a trial court setting.

During the semester students will tackle legal problems starting with client intake at the start of a case, finding legal authority, writing predictive memoranda, and advocating in a trial court setting.

GRADING CRITERIA

The legal memos, in-class writings, oral presentation, class participation, and the final exam will all contribute to your final grade in this class. This class is designed to train students how to handle client problems, analyze those problems objectively, draft objective and predictive memos, and argue in a trial court. You should be fully prepared for each class and act professionally at all times.

Penalties for late submission: *We will strictly follow all due dates.* We set deadlines for turning in assignments just as courts or partners in law firms do. *Grades will be reduced by 10 points on papers that are turned in late on the due date (all papers are due at the beginning of their regularly scheduled class time).* *Further, your grade will be reduced by an additional 10 points for each subsequent day the paper is late after the initial due date.* Grace periods are not granted.

Potential Points Awarded for Assignments:

Assignment	Points
In-Class	50 (10 Assignments 5pts each)
Closed Memo 1	50
Closed Memo Final	75
Open Memo 1	50
Open Memo Final	75
Client Letter	25
Trial Court Memo	50
Final Exam	125
Final Oral Argument	25
Total	525

Attendance Policy: Students must attend all classes. If a student has more than one unexcused absence, his or her final course grade will be lowered by 1/3rd. Any student who misses an in-class assignment will not be allowed to make it up unless the student has informed the instructor that he or she will not be able to attend class that day **and the professor has excused the absence.** *Further, the Casebook Connect quizzes are considered part of your participation in this course. If you do not complete the quizzes, as assigned during the semester, your final grade will be lowered by 1/3rd.*

ASSIGNMENTS DUE FOR EACH CLASS

Week of January 19th: Understanding the legal system and authority. How do we decide which cases or statutes are most important? What law binds Massachusetts trial courts? How do we rank authority by paying attention to key components in a case (relevance, date, place, court)? What are legal citations?

Monday: **NO SCHOOL FEDERAL HOLIDY**

Wednesday: Introduction to Legal Authority and Basic Legal Citation.

Required Reading: *Preparing for Practice Chapters 1-4 and Chapter 14.*

Connected quizzes for chapters 3, 4, & 14 will open on 1/20 and must be completed by 1/25 at 11:00PM.

Week of January 26th: Discussion of closed memo problem. How do I identify the legal issue in a client's case after the intake? What is the format of an interoffice memo? How do I read case law with a view towards using that case to analyze a client's legal problem? How do I properly use the legal writing paradigm known as TRAC?

Monday: Assignment of Closed Memo Problem. *In-Class Assignment 1:* Draft the Issue for the Closed Memo.

Wednesday: Students will get back In Class 1 with instructor's comments.

In-Class Assignment 2: TRAC/Synthesis Exercise.

Required Reading: *Preparing for Practice Chapters 5-7*

Connected quizzes for chapters 6 & 7 will open on 1/26 and must be completed by 1/31 at 11:00PM.

Week of February 2nd: Development of the closed memo problem. Who is my audience? How do I write a legal memorandum to a senior partner describing the state of the law and predicting how a judge will apply the law to a client's case? How do I synthesize the case law to create a rule that can be applied to my client's case?

Monday: Discussion of cases for the closed memo. Students will get back last Wednesday's graded in class assignment to review instructor's comments.

In Class Assignment 3: Headings and Point Headings Exercise

Wednesday: Continue discussion of cases for the closed memo. Students will get back In Class 3 graded assignment.

In Class Assignment 4: Draft the thesis paragraph for the closed memo.

Over the weekend, students should create an outline of the closed memo to discuss on Monday.

Required Reading: *Preparing for Practice Chapters 8 & 9.*

Connected quizzes for chapters 8 & 9 will open on 2/2 and must be completed by 2/8 at 11:00PM.

Week of February 9th: How do I convert an outline of my memo to final memo format? How do I refine the case discussion using IRAC?

Monday: Students will get back In Class 4 Graded Assignment. Discussion of student outline and final discussion of putting together the closed memo.

Wednesday: **FIRST DRAFT OF CLOSED MEMO DUE AT START OF CLASS.**

Students should bring 2 copies of their memo. One to hand in to the Professor and one to use during the self-editing exercise.

ASSIGNMENT OF OPEN MEMO PROBLEM

In-Class Assignment 5: Self-editing my legal memorandum.

Required Reading: *Preparing for Practice Chapters 10 & 11.*

Connected quizzes for chapters 10 & 11 will open on 2/9 and must be completed by 2/15 at 11:00PM.

Week of February 16th: Introduction to legal research: Where do I go to find information about the legal implications of my client's problem? Where do I look for the most relevant and binding authority? What resources are available to help me solve my client's problem? How do I select the right authority? How do I identify the legal problem in my client's case? How do I develop a research strategy?

Monday: **WESTLAW TRAINING (Subject to change)**

Wednesday: Conferences: *Students meet with instructors individually to review instructors' comments on first draft of Closed Memo.*

Week of February 23rd: Further Discussion of the Open Memo problem combine with an introduction to library research. How do I begin to decide on the authorities I will use in my memo? How do I refine my plan? How do I know if I need to keep looking for authority, or if I have exhausted my research efforts?

Monday: **FINAL DRAFT OF CLOSED MEMO DUE AT START OF CLASS.**

LEXIS TRAINING (Subject to change)

Wednesday: Discussion of Open Memo Problem & Library Tour.

In-Class Assignment 6: Draft the Issue for the Open Memo.

Week of March 2nd: Further Discussion of Open Memo Problem.

Monday: Discussion of Open Memo Problem and results of student research.

Wednesday: *In Class 7: Citation Exercise.*

Week of March 9th: *Students must be prepared to present at least three cases a day to the class for the next two weeks of classes; students should have written briefs prepared for all these cases.*

Monday: Case Presentations.

Wednesday: Case Presentations.

Required Reading: Cases students have found through individual research.

Week of March 16th: NO SCHOOL SPRING BREAK

Week of March 23rd: Students will continue to present the cases they have found for their open memo. Students will be questioned on critical aspects of the cases, so the class can determine whether the authority is useful to their client's problem.

Monday: Case Presentations.

In Class 8: Draft Headings and Point Heading for Open Memo.

Wednesday: Wrap up discussion of open memo and answer any final student questions.

Required Reading: *Preparing for Practice Chapters 12 & 13.*

Connected quizzes for chapters 12 & 13 will open on 3/23 and must be completed by 3/29 at 11:00PM.

Week of March 30th: This week students will learn how to communicate with a different audience; the client. We will also begin transitioning to trial advocacy involving yet another audience; the court.

Monday: **FIRST DRAFT OF OPEN MEMO DUE AT START OF CLASS.**

Now that I've predicted the likelihood of success of my client's case, how do I inform the client of my findings? What information should I include in a client letter? What information should I omit from a client letter? How and when do I communicate with clients electronically? What are the advantages and disadvantages of electronic communication? What is proper e-mail etiquette?

Review materials on client letters. Students will generally have time, in class, to begin drafting the client letter.

Wednesday: **Client Letter Due at Start of Class.**

Introduction to the Trial Memo.

Discuss drafting trial memoranda along with format including use of forms for format.

Week of April 6th: Preparing to transition to documents drafted for courts rather than inter-office memoranda. Editing and refining legal analysis. Discussion of trial memo along with research and discussion of authorities.

Monday: Review of graded draft of Open Memo with instructors.

Wednesday: **FINAL DRAFT OF OPEN MEMO DUE AT START OF CLASS.**

Discussion of Trial Memo, Library Tour/Research

In-Class Assignment 9: Draft the issue for the trial court memo.

Required Reading: Materials on drafting documents to trial courts.

Week of April 13th: By this week students should have authority that supports the grounds for their motion. Students should come to class with briefs of the cases they plan to use in the trial memo.

Oral Advocacy: How do I take the information in my predictive memo and present the authorities to persuade a judge to rule in my client's favor? What is a motion? How do I refine my arguments to focus on the specific issue before the trial court? How do I take the information in my predictive memo and begin to rank and analyze the authority to persuade a judge to hold in favor of my client?

Monday: Preparation for trial court arguments: Overview of and discussion of oral advocacy. Group will watch MCLE Judge's Videos

Wednesday: Beginning of Oral Argument practice based on the Trial memo motion; Students should be fully prepared to arguing using cases students have found.

Week of April 20th: Students will continue to refine their trial memos and will begin formal oral argument practice.

Monday: **NO SCHOOL PATRIOTS DAY**

Wednesday: Oral Argument Practice.

In Class 10: Oral Argument Practice

Week of April 27th: Oral Advocacy practice

Monday: **Trial Memo Due at the start of class.** Final oral argument practice session.

Wednesday: **Mock Motion Session**

Students will come dressed for court and argue their motion in front of a mock trial court.

Monday, May 4th: Last Day of Classes.

Review for Final Exam.