

**Syllabus**  
**Advanced Legal Research**  
**Spring, 2015**  
**Spencer L. Simons**

**Purpose of Course:** to develop understanding of legal research as a process. You will learn to plan, track, and assess your research progress in a way that gets you on the right track and guides you to completion with a minimum of wasted effort, duplication, and time. After establishing a solid research process, using the core legal resources used by all attorneys, the course will develop your expertise in critical areas less familiar to many attorneys, such as international and foreign law, empirical (non-legal) research, legislative history, and the increasingly important administrative law. Both Texas and Federal legal research will be studied and practiced. You will be introduced to a number of free and subscription online databases, and will receive instruction in West, Lexis, and Bloomberg Law databases and in specialized resources. Since the goal of research is the production of usable analysis, there will be a research memo assignment culminating in a written analysis of a legal problem. You will also develop a research guide to resources and techniques in a specialized subject of your choosing. Also explored will be the use of tools to identify and properly develop transactional documents, and, as time permits, tips on drafting skills to allow you to develop common documents while avoiding drafting pitfalls.

**Grading:** The research memo assignment counts for 45% of your grade. The research guide counts for 40% of your grade. Periodic assignments for discussion in class will count for 15% of your grade. The Law Center's standards for attendance apply.

**Contact Information:** Questions concerning the course should be directed to Professor Simons at [ssimons@central.uh.edu](mailto:ssimons@central.uh.edu)

**Office Hours:** 9:00 – 5:00 Monday through Friday.

**There will be no final exam.**

**Assigned Texts:** *Federal Legal Research*, Mary Garvey Algero, et al.  
Carolina Academic Press, Revised Printing 2014.

*Texas Legal Research*, Spencer L. Simons  
Carolina Academic Press, Revised Printing 2012.

**Readings for First Week:** Algero, pp. 3 – 21, 23 – 42; Simons, pp. 193 – 201.

### **Class 1: Wednesday, January 21**

Introduction to Course

Introduction to legal research as a process

Assign: Research Guide to a specialized topic

Due: April 27, with presentation to class

Tips on researching and guide development

Readings for second week of class: Simons, pp. 33–45; Algero, pp. 81 – 99.

### **Class 2: Monday, January 26**

Review: American legal and governmental systems

- Documents produced by system

- Organization of legal information

- Publication system

- Finding tools

### **Class 3: Wednesday, January 28**

- Texas Constitution

- Constitutional law research, Texas and Federal

- Finding tools

- Annotations

Readings for next week: Algero, pp. 101 – 123, 157 – 176

Simons, pp. 96 – 99, 104 – 110, 141 – 147, 153 – 154.

### **Class 4: Monday, February 2**

Refresher: Legislative systems, Federal and Texas

- Statutes

- Codes

- Texas subject code/revised civil statute issues

- Finding tools

- Annotations

- Key number system again; how it ties everything together

Online sources

**Class 5: Wednesday, February 4**

Refresher: Administrative agencies and administrative law basics  
Regulations, ALJ decisions, other documents of administrative law  
Administrative law research  
Finding tools  
Online sources  
Updating rules and regulations

Readings for fourth week of class: Algero, pp. 177 – 193, 195 – 214  
Simons, pp. 49 – 57, 59 – 60, 61 – 64, 74 - 77

**Class 6: Monday, February 9**

Refresher: Court systems, Federal and Texas  
Case Reporters  
Judicial opinions; mandatory and persuasive precedent  
Unpublished cases

**Class 7: Wednesday, February 11**

Texas writ/petition notation

Searching for Cases:  
Finding tools  
Key number system  
Updating in print resources  
Online sources

Reading for next week: Algero, pp. 42 – 53, 215 – 231; Simons, p. 166 (C.)  
Assignment for next Monday: Handout Worksheet I and Handout Worksheet II

**Class 8: Monday, February 16**

Do Worksheet I and Worksheet II in class

Updating cases and other authority with citators  
KeyCite and Shepard's

**Class 9: Wednesday, February 18**

WestlawNext, Lexis Advance, Bloomberg: Primary Law Research  
Updating

Visiting lecturer: Research Librarian Emily Lawson

Readings for next week: Algero, pp. 55 – 78; Simons, pp. 175 – 176, 189 – 191

Assignment for next Monday: Handout Worksheet III

**Class 10: Monday, February 23**

Do Worksheet III in class

Secondary Resources: Dictionaries  
Encyclopedias  
Words and Phrases  
Treatises, hornbooks, nutshells  
Legal periodicals  
Restatements  
Looseleaf services  
Practice guides  
Jury instructions

**Class 11: Wednesday, February 25**

Theory of information management and organization  
Classification systems  
Descriptors and controlled languages  
Access points  
Catalogs – power users  
Indexes  
Abstracting Services  
Full text searching, strengths and weaknesses  
Natural language searching, strengths and weaknesses

Readings for next week: Simons, pp. 6–13, 185-187, 206–213

Assignment for Wednesday: each student team to report in depth on one “looseleaf service”

**Class 12: Monday, March 2**

The seven step research process  
The Journal

**Class 13: Wednesday, March 4**

Looseleaf services  
Student teams explain use of selected looseleaf service in depth

Assignment: Research problem – apply research process, due next Wednesday

**Class 14: Monday, March 9**

Power searching in CALR databases (e.g. Westlaw/Lexis/ Bloomberg Law). How principles of information organization and retrieval are used: full text; segments; indexes; TOCs; limiting sets. Emphasis on Westlaw key number system and Lexis headnote system.  
Research Librarian Katy Badeaux

**Class 15: Wednesday, March 11**

Review in class: Research process assignment results  
Overview of bankruptcy law

Readings for week following Spring Break: Algero, pp. 125 – 156  
Simons, pp. 115–121, 122 – 135

[Spring Break]

**Class 16: Monday, March 23**

Assign memo research assignment. Discuss unfamiliar terms in fact pattern; general expectations for research documentation and memo. Due: Wednesday, April 15  
Specialized bankruptcy law resources, primary and secondary  
Tips on research and writing strategy

**Class 17: Wednesday, March 25**

Special Research Topic: Legislative history, Federal and Texas

Bill tracking, Federal and Texas.

Assignment for next Monday: Handout Worksheet V (Legislative History)

**Class 18: Monday, March 30**

Do Handout Worksheet V in class

Special Research Topic: International and foreign legal research

Assignment for next two classes: Office presentation (make appointment) to “partner” on research project progress

**Class 19: Wednesday, April 1**

**Office visits with Partner scheduled for this period [2]**

Readings for next week: Algero, pp. 233 – 240

Simons, pp. 112–113, 189–191

**Class 20: Monday, April 6**

**Office visits with Partner scheduled for this period [2]**

**Class 21: Wednesday, April 8**

Special Research Topic: Empirical (non-legal) research, including Bloomberg Law and other selected online resources. Presenter Mon Yin Lung

Other: Ethics opinions  
Court Rules  
Other codified rules  
Jury Instructions  
POF; COA; Trials

**Class 22: Monday, April 13**

**No Class: Individual meetings with professor to review progress on Research Guide.**

**Class 23: Wednesday, April 15**

Bankruptcy memo due, including journals and time sheets.

Review Bankruptcy memo: process used; Journals and time sheets;

Analysis of Bankruptcy memo problem.

Readings for next week: Simons, pp. 182 – 184

Assignment for Wednesday: Each student brings a formbook to class, discuss features

**Class 24: Monday, April 20**

Drafting aids, “formbooks”

Researching for transactions

Bloomberg Law for transactional research and forms

Tips on Drafting

**Class 25: Wednesday, April 22**

Discussion of features of formbooks brought by students

Continuation: Tips on drafting

**Class 26: Monday, April 27**

Research Guide due

Each student gives presentation on Research Guide to specialized research topic.

**Class 27: Wednesday, April 29      LAST DAY OF CLASS**

Continued: student presentations on Research Guides to specialized research topics.