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

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

There will be no final exam.


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


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

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
Updaging
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

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
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.