



**Syllabus for Legal Communication and Research Skills II
Spring 2025—Section D3**

Logistical Information

Professor: Annette Torres

Class Time: Friday, 9:00–10:50 a.m., Room F108

Office: C416

Phone number: 305.284.5183

Email: atorres@law.miami.edu

Office Hours: Mondays at 2:00-3:30 p.m., and by appointment. I will hold office hours in my Zoom meeting room: 3288303541

I. Course Description and Objectives

Legal Communication and Research Skills II will help you continue to develop your reasoning, writing, research, and oral argument skills in the context of client advocacy. This course builds on the foundational skills taught in Legal Communication and Research Skills I, moving away from predictive writing and toward persuasive written and oral advocacy. You will write and give oral argument on pretrial and appellate briefs. You will learn how to prepare documents tailored to the demands of contemporary legal practice, research advanced legal issues, interact with clients and colleagues, and collaborate with colleagues to achieve the best result for the client. You will also receive training in professionalism, oral advocacy, and other essential communication skills.

This course uses reading materials, lectures, in-class activities, writing assignments, research exercises, detailed individualized feedback, meetings with faculty, observation of court proceedings, and other tools to help you learn the skills crucial to effective lawyering.

II. How to Succeed in LComm

A. Attendance

This is a learning-by-doing class, so punctual attendance at all classroom (and potentially online) classes and conferences is required. Any unexcused absence may adversely affect your grade. Because the American Bar Association requires regular

and punctual class attendance, missing more than twenty percent of class meetings may preclude you from earning credit for this course. Conferences with me are considered class meetings. If you miss a class, you are responsible for all materials, announcements, and assignments covered.

Extended Absences: Students who miss class for five days or more should complete an absence form with the Dean of Students (her email address is deanofstudents@law.miami.edu). The Dean of Students will notify faculty members of extended absences, working with faculty to make sure that we support our students who may be affected by extended illness or absences due to compliance with University public health protocols.

B. Professionalism and Class Participation

“I revere the law, the judicial system, and the legal profession, and will at all times in my professional and private lives uphold the dignity and esteem of each.”
Creed of Professionalism, The Florida Bar.

As you learned in Legal Communication and Research Skills I, you are a professional in training. You should continue to display your commitment to the ideals and values of professionalism. Throughout this semester, you will participate in discussions and exercises designed to reinforce the importance of legal professionalism. Your final grade includes a component for professionalism and class participation, with the expectation that you will do all of the following:

1. Attend all meetings (e.g., classes, conferences, and oral arguments) and be punctual;
2. Prepare for classes by completing all reading and writing assignments;
3. Participate actively in classroom discussions, out-of-class activities, and group work;
4. Complete and submit all assignments by the established deadlines;
5. Proofread and edit your writing to ensure compliance with format requirements, word limits, citation rules, etc.;
6. Show respect and civility when giving and receiving feedback or otherwise communicating with faculty, guest practitioners, and fellow students;
7. Make a good-faith effort and follow the directions on all assignments, whether graded or ungraded; and
8. Use laptops, phones, and other electronic devices only as permitted.

C. Ungraded Assignments

You will complete several ungraded assignments designed to help you learn how to be an effective advocate. You must write your own assignments without any

assistance from others. You may not read, review, or proofread another student's assignment. If you have any questions about the course or any assignment, you should speak with me.

A lawyer must always do his or her best work. You must make a good-faith effort and follow the instructions for all assignments, whether graded or ungraded. Failure to demonstrate a good-faith effort on an ungraded assignment can result in a deduction of your final grade for the course. Ungraded assignments for this course include the following:

1. Partial Motion to Dismiss or Opposition;
2. Complete Motion to Dismiss or Opposition; and
3. Oral Argument on Motion or Opposition.

D. Graded Assignments

Your final grade this semester will be based on your performance on the following: (1) professionalism and class participation; (2) research report to supervising attorney; (3) final appellate brief; and (4) oral argument on final brief. More specifically, your grade for this semester will be determined as follows:

Professionalism and Class Participation	15%
Report to Supervising Attorney	Pass/Fail
Appellate Brief	70%
Final Oral Argument	15%

E. Deadlines

Each assignment must be submitted by the prescribed deadline. In law practice, time management and adherence to deadlines are essential. Indeed, missing a deadline may amount to legal malpractice.

Accordingly, students who submit a late assignment may forfeit the opportunity to receive my critique or to meet with me regarding their assignment, or they may face other penalties. I may make exceptions for legitimate and serious emergencies. If an emergency arises, such as a documented illness or a death in the family, request an extension from me as soon as you learn of the emergency. Retroactive extension requests will not be considered.

III. Contact Information

My office is located in C416 (on the fourth floor on the North side of the building). You may contact me at 305-284-5183 or atorres@law.miami.edu. Email is

the fastest and most reliable way to contact me. I will strive to respond to your email within a reasonable timeframe; however, you should not expect me to respond after 5:00 p.m. or on weekends. Please note that I may not respond to inquiries about an assignment during the twenty-four hours before the assignment is due, as you should be in the final proofreading stage by that time.

Emails in the professional context are like business letters. Before you send an email to me, other professors, administrators, staff, or other students, make sure it is professional in content and tone. Before asking a question by email, review the Syllabus or relevant class materials to determine if the answer has already been provided.

IV. Texts

Required

1. *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (21st ed. 2020).
2. Jill Barton and Rachel Smith, *The Handbook for the New Legal Writer* (3d ed. 2023).

Recommended

1. Antonin Scalia and Bryan A. Garner, *Making Your Case: The Art of Persuading Judges* (2008).
2. Ross Guberman, *Point Made: How to Write Like the Nation's Top Advocates* (2d ed. 2014).
3. Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*.

V. Collaboration, Plagiarism, and the Honor Code

You must review and abide by the School of Law's Honor Code for all assignments. Plagiarism is an honor code violation that may result in penalties, including suspension or expulsion. *Do not accept assistance, give assistance, or collaborate on any assignments, whether graded or ungraded, except as permitted. If you are in doubt about whether an action violates this policy, please ask me first.*

VI. Blackboard & TWEN

I will post materials on the course Blackboard page. You should visit the Blackboard page regularly and be prepared to access any posted documents during our class meetings. Note that you will post your writing assignments and register for individual conferences on the course TWEN page.

VII. Laptops and Electronic Devices

Laptops and tablets are permitted in class; however, you may use them solely for legitimate class purposes. Improper use of laptops or other devices during class may result in a deduction to your professionalism grade or other penalties. Cell phones must be on silent and put away during class. If you have an emergency and are waiting for a call or message, please notify me before class begins.

VIII. Academic Integrity and Intellectual Property

Students are expressly prohibited from recording any class meeting or other part of this course. Professor Torres is the copyright owner of the courseware. Individual copies or recordings of the materials posted on Blackboard and/or class sessions are not allowed. Such materials cannot be shared outside the physical or virtual classroom environment.

IX. Peer Review

Law school is a place of ideas. In our classroom, I expect all students to express and respond to ideas freely and respectfully, without fear of negative treatment from faculty or peers. Exchanging constructive criticism with peers is essential in any law practice, and such criticism should reflect a spirit of collaboration and education.

X. Wellness, Disabilities, and Title IX

The University of Miami School of Law is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment that meets the needs of our diverse student body. If you have a disability (including physical or mental health challenges) and need academic accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Services via email at access@law.miami.edu. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive; students are encouraged to contact the office and inquire about any disability-related needs within the first weeks of the semester.

The University seeks to maintain a safe learning, living, and working environment free from discrimination based upon gender or sex. This includes all types of sexual misconduct including but not limited to: Dating Violence, Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault (including Sexual Battery), Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Harassment, and Stalking. This also includes protection from pregnancy discrimination. For additional information about the University's Title IX policies, including resources and reporting options, please visit www.miami.edu/titleix or contact the University's Title IX Office at the following address: titleixcoordinator@miami.edu.

XI. Preferred Names and Pronouns

The University of Miami School of Law seeks to provide a safe and inclusive environment for the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) community. This policy is designed to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students, including those who identify as transgender, non-binary, or gender nonconforming. Students have the right to be addressed by a name, gender marker, and set of gender pronouns that correspond to the student's gender identity. A student's legal name and gender must be used in the following instances: Transcripts and Diplomas, Degree Audit Report, Enrollment and Degree Verifications, Bar Applications, Health Insurance and Legal Medical Documents, Financial Aid Documents, Student Accounts, International Student Reporting, Study Abroad, Student Employment, and Payroll. Students who wish to change their legal name at the University of Miami School of Law must submit the required documents to the Office of the Law Registrar as described at: <https://www.law.miami.edu/iml/courses-registration/registrar-services-and-forms>.

XII. ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE (ATTACHED)

Reading and Assignment Schedule
Legal Communication and Research Skills II
Spring 2025—Section D3

Complete the assigned readings before the start of class each week. As the semester progresses, I may add assignments or modify due dates.

Week	Date	Assignments, readings, and oral arguments
1	January 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: <i>The Handbook for the New Legal Writer</i>: Chapters 25-28, pages 181-206; Sample Motions, pages 245-76 • Read: Assignment materials for the Motion to Dismiss/Opposition to Motion to Dismiss (posted on Blackboard). Find and read the cases required for the assignment.
2	January 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Syllabus and Assignment Schedule • Read: <i>Handbook</i>: Chapters 29-32, pages 207-44 • Optional Listening: Podcasts 1, 2, and 3 at jillbarton.net. The password is Kagan! • Bring draft of Partial Motion or Opposition to class (2 printed copies)
3	NO CLASS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual conferences on Zoom (in lieu of class) • Writing Assignment Due: Partial Motion or Opposition—submit document on TWEN at least 24 hours before your conference

Week	Date	Assignments, readings, and oral arguments
4	February 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: <i>Handbook</i>: Chapter 39, pages 347-61 • Read: <i>Understanding and Mastering the Bluebook</i>: Chapter 8 (posted on Blackboard) • Read: Supplement on trial court oral arguments (posted on Blackboard) • Optional Listening: Podcasts 4, 5, and 6
5	February 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Assignment Due: Complete Motion or Opposition • Complete: Oral arguments (in class) • The final assignment materials will be posted on Blackboard on February 14. Please read them carefully before 2/18/25.
6	Tuesday, February 18 12:30-1:50 p.m. E352	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of our usual class time, we will meet over lunch on 2/18/25 to discuss the final assignment
7	Monday, February 24 11:10-12:30 p.m. Room F300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: <i>Handbook</i>: Chapter 33, pages 277-99; Chapters 40-44, pages 365-402 • Optional Listening: Podcasts 7, 8, and 9 • Prepare to discuss the final assignment materials and your writing plan for the final appellate brief

Week	Date	Assignments, readings, and oral arguments
8	March 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare to discuss your research for the final appellate brief • Writing Assignment Due: Research Report (the specific due date and submission instructions will be provided in the assignment materials)
9	NO CLASS	SPRING BREAK
10	March 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: <i>Handbook</i>: Chapters 19-24, pages 137-77 • Complete: Online course evaluation • Bring draft of your final brief to class
11	March 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Class
12	Monday, March 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APPELLATE BRIEF DUE ON TWEN BY 8:00 P.M.
12	April 3-4	<p style="text-align: center;">ORAL ARGUMENTS</p> <p><i>April 3-4 are the dates on which you should be available for oral arguments. If you have a conflict with any of these dates, please let me know by February 7, 2025. The specific date, time, and location for each student's oral argument will be announced later in the semester.</i></p>