

Creating Subject Specific Advanced Legal Research Classes

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Introduction

In January 2018, the four public services librarians at DePaul University's College of Law met with the Library Director to discuss their role in Legal Research Instruction.

First year Legal Analysis, Research, and Communication classes are taught by both full time faculty and adjuncts. As a general rule in the past, they invited the librarians in to do what is commonly referred to as "one shots", general introductions and overviews of legal resources. Over time, those sessions were reduced and last year, the public services librarians created a set of videos that the LARC instructors could use as a replacement for in class library resource instruction.

Advanced Legal Research has traditionally been taught by the Library Director, who is a Tenured Faculty member.

In the fall of 2017, the Law School began discussions related to offering a set of 1 credit classes during what would be called the "J Term", a brief one week term between the holiday break and the beginning of the spring term. When the librarians met in January 2018, they suggested offering at least one library research class during the J Term of 2019.



Process

Who wants to be involved? All four public services librarians were interested in teaching a 1 credit legal research course.

What topics should be covered? The Law School prides itself on six areas of excellence and it was decided that to better support those, that the librarians would each take responsibility for one of four of the areas of excellence, with more to come in the future.

Who would coordinate the process? Anne Hudson, newly hired as the Senior Faculty Research librarian, took the lead on this project, working closely with the library director to identify common issues to creating a new course. They reviewed other academic law library websites and the RIPS-SIS teach-in pages to determine what research classes were being offered by different institutions.

A draft syllabus with learning objectives; potential assignments, an annotated bibliography and research plan; brief memo providing course rationale; and, new course proposal form were provided to the other three librarians to assist them in creating their own course content.

Meetings were held to discuss teaching and learning strategies as well as the technology involved in teaching at DePaul.



Law School

Substantive Course Faculty were contacted to determine interest in collaborating on a supportive research course. Alumni were contacted to serve as guest lecturers

Both the Curriculum Committee and Faculty of the whole supported all 4 proposals and they were listed in the Course Catalog as: Law 641 Practice Legal Research

The law school expressed an interest in offering the courses during the summer of 2018 and 3 courses were completed and ready to go however the law school only listed Cultural Heritage Law Research so that was the only course that was offered.

Heather Hummons, Head of Access Services, taught that class and in terms of student evaluations it was extremely successful. Students are interested in Legal Research and especially how it applies to their future practice.

Tips: Use samples and experiences of others, there is no reason to reinvent the wheel. Take what you know from legal research generally and apply it to areas of interest at your own schools.

Lessons Learned: While the law school may seem interested, they may not pay attention to course listings and marketing your classes. You may have to do some leg work of your own to get the word out.



Legal Research Courses to be offered January 2019

Business Law; Cultural Heritage Law; Intellectual Property; and Technology

Courses to be considered for January 2020

Health Law and Immigration Law

Rinn Law Library

