PROFESSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS LA135 OUTLINE AND SYLLABUS

I. Course Outline and Objectives:

For each student to develop a working knowledge of the attributes of professional effectiveness for use as an employed paralegal/legal nurse. Each student should, by the end of the course, be able to:

A. Have taken another step toward becoming a truly educated and enriched individual by learning to recognize, understand and accept ownership for his or her own learning through such activities as participating in class discussion in an informed and professional manner; asking questions of one's self, other students, and the instructor in order to more fully understand a concept or idea; responding thoughtfully to ideas that challenge his or her own thinking, etc.

B. Identify and demonstrate an understanding of the attributes of an effective professional with particular emphasis on effectiveness in a legal environment. Student evidence of the above includes, but is not limited to:

1. Articulating a cogent and meaningful personal mission statement; and

2. Utilizing in his/her daily discourse and professional work principles of personal integrity, trustworthiness, etc.

C. Know and demonstrate a general understanding of relevant ethical, moral, social, and political considerations.

II. Texts


B. Recommended: Foster, Rick, and Hicks, Greg. How We Choose To Be Happy. New York: Perigee Books.


D. Suggested and mandatory outside reading assignments may supplement this text.

Strongly Recommended Texts and other Resources:
The following resources are not required for this class, but in the judgment of the instructor are very valuable to any person engaged in any of the following tasks: a) discerning his/her's purpose in life; b) job hunting; c) making career/life plans, etc. Therefore these resources are highly recommended:


III. Grading System

A. Class Participation in discussions, scenarios, and readings (attendance is subsumed within this portion of the grade.) 60%

B. Paper (unless otherwise announced, a professional resume, references and cover letter customized to the student's unique mix of goals, skills, circumstances, etc.) Deadline for submission announced in class) 40%

100%

IV. Grading Philosophy

Grading in this course is not on the basis of a curve or any other criteria which relativizes student work product. In other words, the grade earned by a student is not based upon a comparison of the student's work product with any other student's work product. Grades are measured against an absolute. That absolute is whether the student's work product is substantively correct and presented in a manner which demonstrates a command of higher thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), balanced judgment, clarity and precision of thought, good oral and written communication skills (correct use of grammar and syntax, logical development of ideas, with supporting citation to authority), and overall professional bearing.

Under this system of grading it is possible for all students to achieve the highest grade awardable. The converse is also possible. On balance, this system of grading is rigorous. There is no arbitrary grade inflation or deflation under this grading philosophy.
Under only the most unusual of circumstances will extra credit work be considered. Missed exams, low exam grades, etc. do not constitute "most unusual circumstances."

This class is part of each student's preparation for a professional career. One salient attribute of professionalism is personal accountability and responsibility. The grading philosophy adopted in this course is for the express purpose of promoting professional development. The hallmark of professionalism is whether a job is done right, and done right the first time in the workplace. Attached is the program's Student Assessment Form. Your grade will include your professionalism as measured under the criteria of this form.

V. Class Participation Grading:

The rationale for emphasizing class participation is research into adult education demonstrates that active participation by the student is the key to effective comprehension, long-term retention, and readiness for the workplace. For the student to demonstrate comprehension, retention, and readiness to the instructor, the student must show he/she is contributing to his/her own and his/her fellow students' intellectual enrichment in a meaningful and mature manner.

The following is an illustration of how this component of your grade is determined. If the student wants to achieve 100% for participation, then the student must attend all class sessions and come to each class well-prepared, and must qualitatively (not quantitatively) engage in discussions, ask questions, make connections between sources of information, and become involved in scenarios, presentations, readings, briefings, etc.

If the student elects not to attend class, or attends by filling a chair (not engaging him/herself in group discussions, scenarios, presentations etc.), it will be considered as 0% of the class participation portion of the student's grade and his/her grade will reflect accordingly.

Between 100% and 0% class participation lies a great deal of latitude for the student with respect to his/her involvement. As before, an illustration: If a student attends the great majority of classes, and meaningfully participates (as defined above) in about half of those classes, the student will receive 50% of the grade ascribed to class participation. Thus, the student need only honestly examine the number of times he/she attended class and actively participated (as defined above) divided by the total number of class sessions in the quarter to approximate what his/her percentage of the participation grade will be. Other factors such as a
student’s progress throughout a quarter, and the quality and insight of his/her contributions are also grading considerations.

Class participation should not be taken as a reason to engage in immature, offensive, rude, belligerent, etc., behavior. Students are guided by the college’s Code of Student Conduct when in class.

Conceptually, participation (as defined above) is an indirect measure of maturity, motivation, and professionalism. One aspect of these attributes is honest self-awareness and self-assessment. Another aspect of these attributes is ownership and responsibility for outcomes. The instructor expects each student to honestly assess his/her motivation, maturity, and professionalism, and to take responsibility for what is learned and how well it is learned. Practice makes the master. Honest, active, mature classroom participation will lead to the same in the workplace.

The instructor understands the subjectivity inherent in this portion of the student’s grade. The instructor also understands such mitigating factors as shyness, slow verbal skills, self-esteem/self-confidence issues, different learning styles, etc. The instructor invites students to discuss this portion of the grade with him early in the quarter, NOT AT THE END OF THE QUARTER, when the quarter’s dye has been cast. The instructor makes every effort to be fair with respect to grading, and does consider mitigating factors.

However, the instructor also expects a student to take risks regarding mitigating factors (examples above) in the student’s life. For example, if a student deems him/herself to be shy, and therefore avoids participating in class, the instructor expects that student to make consistent good faith efforts at overcoming his/her shyness. The same would be expected in the workplace. RISK AND REWARD ARE COMMENSURATE. Generally speaking, the greater one risks, the greater one is rewarded. Here one’s reward is greater learning, enhanced self-confidence, more fun in the long run, and an easier transition to the workplace.

VI. Incompletes

Only under the most unusual and/or extreme of circumstances will a student be permitted to take an incomplete or a "Z" grade for this class. Students, who do not attend regularly, perform poorly on exams, or other class work should not anticipate that they could receive an incomplete and/or "Z" grade for this class.
VII. Instructor

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E-mail: bob.loomis@scc.spokane.edu

VIII. Attendance and Participation

Full attendance and participation is expected. Exceptions will be made for emergencies and unusual circumstances (family death, hospitalization, etc.). Conflicts with work, vacation, etc., will not count, and a missed class will count as an absence. Late attendance will be considered, and will negatively affect the class participation portion of a student's grade. Any deadline given in class (example, handing in a paper, time for giving a test) will be strictly enforced. To even be considered for deadline dispensation, the student must notify the instructor, before the deadline’s expiration; of the situation (a phone message is sufficient). Under only the most unusual circumstances will individuals be allowed a deadline dispensation. Minor illnesses, forgetfulness, work conflicts, etc., do not constitute "most unusual circumstances."

This class is part of each student’s preparation for a professional career. A hallmark of professionalism is punctuality. A high percentage of this class’s grade is based on class participation. Participation includes prompt attendance. Students who routinely come late to class and/or leave early and/or do not participate should expect the participation portion of their grade to be adversely impacted.

This class is distinct from others--its theme is professionalism. Therefore special rules apply to this class, which are designed to foster professionalism. They are:

1. The student must wear to class attire appropriate for the professional office setting. The failure to do so counts as an absence for that day.

2. The doors to the classroom will be promptly locked at the start of class. Late comers to class will not be admitted--be punctual. If you are locked out of class, you are counted absent for that day. If your behavior upon finding yourself locked out of class demonstrates a lack of maturity (impatience, outbursts of anger, threats, etc.), such behavior counts as an additional class absence--in other words, based on the following, the late comer will have failed the class.
3. You are allowed one absence from class. Two or more absences equals a failing grade for the class, except in the most extreme and exigent circumstances (emphasis on the word "most"—any occurrence which could remotely be anticipated and planned for by a reasonable person does not fall within the above definition).

IX. Ethics

Ethics and professionalism are of central concern in the legal environment. Therefore, any student found cheating as defined in WAC 132Q-04-060 will receive, at the least, an automatic failing grade for the course. Additional disciplinary measures may be taken as deemed appropriate. For example, plagiarism on any class paper, project, pleading, presentation, etc. is cheating.

Students who disrupt the class's positive learning environment are also subject to discipline under the college's Code of Conduct as defined in WAC 132Q-04-067: "Any student who, by act of misconduct, substantially disrupts any college class by engaging in conduct that renders it difficult or impossible to maintain the decorum of the class, shall be subject to disciplinary action." A disruption to the class's positive learning environment is anything that prevents the instructor from effectively conveying information to the class. Examples are: sleeping, rudeness, talking in class, unpermitted physical contact, body odor, excessive questioning, etc. Disciplinary action is found under WAC 132Q-04-260 with such examples as a disciplinary warning, reprimand, disciplinary probation, dismissal and fines. A faculty member at Spokane Community College has the right to suspend a student who disrupts class for up to three class days. The faculty member decides what is disruptive, see WAC 132Q-05-033.

X. Legal Advice:

The instructor is a licensed and practicing attorney. Additionally the instructor is a relatively caring individual. On a regular basis the instructor is approached by students seeking legal advice. The Rules of Professional Conduct governing the activities of an attorney in Washington State, provide that when an attorney provides legal advice to a person, an attorney-client relationship is established, the attorney is professionally responsible for his/heir's advice, and the attorney can be sued for malpractice in such situations. This is true whether money is received or not, and whether the advice is casual or not. The instructor does not carry malpractice insurance, and his office is not configured to check for conflicts of interest, calendaring, etc., which are integral to good professional representation. Additionally, the common way in which the instructor is approached for legal advice, frequently means the instructor is not provided with the correct and/or complete information, upon which a reasoned
professional judgment could be based. Please therefore understand that the instructor, with some measure of regret, cannot, and does not provide legal advice to students, even in the form of a hypothetical—a frequently employed student technique. If you are in the position of needing free or low-cost legal advise, the instructor has in his office, for free, a flyer with contact information for many of the agencies in the Inland Northwest which provide such services to the public. You need only ask.

XI. Student Services

The Americans with Disabilities Act is designed to ensure that students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to access academic programs and successfully complete their educational goals. Spokane Community College is committed to providing accessibility to all students. Any students with disabilities who have accommodation needs must contact Disability Support Services located in the Learning Resource Center (Library) or call Laura at 533-8872 to make an appointment to complete the intake process. Additionally the student should contact me after class to further facilitate the necessary accommodation. This information will remain strictly confidential.

XII Outline

The following is an outline of subjects to be covered in the class. The class may not cover all of the following topics, since each classes pace varies. Additionally the topics may not be covered in the order in which they are listed below.

PROFESSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   A. Course Objectives

II. Paradigms and Principles:
   A. An overview of effectiveness in a legal setting.

III. Personal Vision

IV. Interpersonal Skills and Leadership

V. Empathic Communication

VI. Cooperation and Empowerment
VII. Renewal

VIII. Responsibility

IX. Other Communication Skills

X. Critical Thinking, Analytical Ability, and Judgment

XI. Miscellaneous