Research Paper

A research paper may be submitted in lieu of taking the long version of the final exam. The research paper may also count as your writing requirement. A paper submitted must be at least 20 typed pages in length. A paper submitted for a writing requirement must be 30 typed pages. The form of the paper should be double-spaced, with footnotes on the same page, not at the conclusion. The deadline for turning in completed papers is April 17, 2006. A one page outline of the paper is due February 16, 2006. Turning the paper after the deadline will result in a grade reduction of one full letter for each week it is late.

The substance of the paper must address an intersection of law and poverty. I encourage you to write on an issue in which you have some personal interest. Topic areas should focus on civil law issues can include but are by no means limited to: Katrina issues; nursing home issues; development of social welfare law from Elizabethan poor laws; homelessness and/or poverty in children, women, elderly, disabled, or other populations; disability law; the working poor; Medicare; Medicaid; healthcare for the uninsured; poverty in the third world; public housing; welfare; AIDS; hunger; the WIC program; elderly; feminization of poverty; financing Social Security; creating a right to shelter; Native Americans or Hispanic Americans or African Americans or Asian Americans or Irish Americans and poverty; public education; Social Security; urban development and the poor; rural poverty; other poverty programs or laws. Papers or projects on criminal law and tax law are not appropriate.

Topic perspectives can include but are not limited to: this is what a particular situation is, was, and should be; historical-legal development of an area of law; whether a law or program is fulfilling its legislative intention or is in fact counterproductive; a blueprint for the future; how one state or community or neighborhood has experienced the topic; comparing and contrasting a law with its implementation or two laws or two states' experiences.

I value actual factual research highly when combined with legal research. Thus a paper which combines quality legal research and writing with quality results from interviews or independent factual determinations will receive a better grade than one which is all the result of purely theoretical legal research. For example, a paper which examines the legal problems of the working poor who do not have health insurance may well be a good paper. Another paper which examines the legal problems of the working poor who do not have health insurance and also tests out the actual operations of the Medicaid program as it is implemented by local health care providers or poor people themselves could well be a better paper.

Footnotes should contain enough information to be able to answer the question: where can the teacher find the authority for what the student said? Where possible cite to primary authorities, e.g. do not cite the Wall Street Journal or Time magazine or a law
review article for statutes, cite the statute itself. Consult the Blue Book for ideas on form for footnotes. Absolute compliance with the Blue Book is not necessary but it is a good place to get ideas on how to accurately cite.

A note about sources and integrity. I expect you understand you must document your sources and you must not quote from sources without attribution. This means that if you use a passage or even a footnote from another source you must cite to that source. For example, if you are highlighting a passage from a law review article which footnotes that author’s source you should not only cite the source found in the law review article but also cite the law review article you took it from, unless you went to that source and read it directly yourself. If your paper suggests that research of others is actually research of yours, that can pose a very serious problem for your grade and an honor code violation for you.

I am willing to look at your rough draft and give you my reactions, as long as you give the rough draft to me at least 2 weeks prior to when the final paper is due.

Criteria used to calculate the grade include whether the paper reviewed and incorporated the following: historical context; economic dimension; review of the law involved; legislative and political history; legal analysis; fair and accurate use of a range of sources, e.g. law reviews, cases, statutes, background papers, current news, and/or legislative materials; fair treatment of opposing views; factual research and analysis; clarity; depth; insight; thoughtfulness and critical thinking; and ability to communicate in a persuasive, competent and professional manner.

Project

There is also an option to do a project on an issue involving Law and Poverty. The choice of the project is up to you but will have to be approved in advance by me. The project has to involve at least 24 hours of non-paid work and you will have to keep a journal while you are conducting the project and write a five page reflection paper on your experience.

The deadline for turning in completed reflection papers is April 17, 2006. A one page proposal of the project is due February 16, 2006. Turning the reflection in after the deadline will result in a grade reduction of one full letter for each week it is late.

The subject of your project should involve law and poverty, but not criminal or tax law. Your proposal should outline what you intend to do and what you expect to learn from the experience. You must keep a journal indicating what activities you engaged in, when and how long you did them, and what you were learning about law, poverty, and yourself over the course of the project. Your reflection paper will be evaluated on the breadth of your experience and your reflection, your observations, your insights, and your ability to critically analyze what you experienced. Your grade for the project will be given based on the totality of the work you put in on the project, your journal, and your reflection paper.
Final Exam

For those writing papers or doing a project, instead of the full exam, there will be a short exam at the conclusion of the course. There are several possible outcomes from the short exam: grade remains the same; grade raised by one-half or one whole letter grade; or grade lowered one-half or one whole letter grade.

There is no penalty for you if you choose not to do the paper, or complete your project, even after turning in an outline or proposal, just take the exam.