

Setting Up a Law Practice
Fall 2021
Willamette University College of Law
Adjunct Professor Kristin LaMont
Tuesday 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm
WUCL Room 218

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to building a successful law practice and, in many ways, a chance for you to create a career plan and life plan. Students find this course quite fun and creative. We will focus on the practical skills and information needed to create and build a profitable law practice that you will enjoy for years to come.

Topics include selecting a practice area, starting a practice, selecting your business entity, finding and leasing office space, using technology, hiring staff, marketing, finding clients, keeping clients, managing your cases, getting paid, using a trust account and growing your practice.

There are no tests. Generally, you will have weekly reading that consists of online articles and website exploration. You will have weekly assignments to complete as well. Be ready to discuss assigned reading and projects at the next class.

Professor:

Kristin LaMont
503.371.9500 (office)
503.508.8308 (cell)
klamont@willamette.edu

Office Hours:

I love teaching this course and I enjoy getting to know each of my students. In my spare time I run my own law practice. I do not keep regular office hours at WUCL. I usually arrive to class about 15 minutes early and I am happy to stay after class to talk with students. If you need my undivided attention or wish to talk to me privately - please give me a call or send me a private message in our classroom Slack. I can usually respond to you within twenty-four hours. You are always welcomed to meet with me via Zoom by appointment - just call my office and our receptionist can get you scheduled. Many students stay in contact after the course is done - to share their successes and ask for advice. I hope that you do too.

Communication:

My primary form of communication with you about the class will be by Slack. I will send you an invitation to our Slack group via email before the course begins. (Slack is a

free app you can download to your laptop, tablet or phone.) Throughout the semester you will receive and turn in your assignments by Slack. I strongly suggest you start a folder on your computer or at a web storage site to keep track of your work. You may use the documents I share with you to develop your own forms - “piracy” is encouraged in this one instance.

Textbook: None

Class Times and Attendance:

You are expected to attend class. Arriving late or leaving early from class may be treated as an absence. If you have excessive absences, you will not receive credit for the course.

Participation:

Please participate! Each student is expected to participate in classroom discussions and be ready to share their questions, insight, and research. If we use Zoom, please leave video on during class. Use mute functions unless you are speaking. Raise your hand when you want to speak, and I’ll call on you. This class works best with full engagement.

Assignments:

Assignments will be given via Slack and, unless otherwise noted in the assignment, **due by the next class at noon**. Late assignments may not receive full credit. Always let me know ahead of time (email) if you can’t attend a class or complete your assignment on time.

Your assignments should be submitted to me via Slack in PDF format and you should name your document with the assignment number, your last name and the date.

Examples of how to name your assignments:

1 yourname 2021.09.02

_____ **2 yourname 2021.09.09**

(The reason this is important is that your assignments will be downloaded and organized in my google drive folder - and if you use these naming conventions, it is much easier for me to grade and organize your work.)

How to create a PDF:

You can create a PDF out of any document by selecting “print” and choosing the PDF option, or you can “save as” and select PDF as the file type.)

If you aren’t sure how to create a PDF - ASK! I’ve found many students have never used this function - and it is easy to learn.

Grading: This is a pass/fail class. I can and do award honors grades to deserving students.

Your final credit will be based on:

Attendance

Participation

Assignments

COURSE OUTLINE AND OBJECTIVES:

Organizing your practice.

- The big decision - owning a law practice.
- Lifestyle design
- Entity choice
- Specializing vs general practice
- Choosing your practice area
- Solo or partnership?
- Naming your firm

Getting located.

- Where do you want to live? Rural? Urban?
- How do you want to work?
 - Virtual law practice
 - Working from home
 - Office sharing
 - Your own space
- Leases - how to negotiate a great deal
- Decor and design on a dime
- Design for function

Getting equipped and online.

- Furniture
- Technology needs
- Phones and cell phones
- Internet
- Email and web domains
- Software
- Hardware
- Supplies and vendors
- Practice management
- Billing software
- Legal research

Getting clients.

- Marketing
- Website design
- Networking
- Calls and emails from potential clients
- How to interview a potential client
- Fee agreements
- Referrals
- Insurance
- Building relationships with lawyers and staff
- Building relationships with judges

Building relationships with court staff

Keeping clients.

Setting the tone
Communicating with clients
Delivering good news and bad
Workflow - managing the project
Unhappy clients - what to do

Getting paid.

Pro Bono on purpose
Retainers
IOLTA accounts
billing practices
Collection of fees
Reasonable fees
Flat fees/billable hour/contingency

Making a profit - plan for success.

Creating and following a budget
Setting and achieving goals
 long term vs short term
Projecting income flow
Dealing with cash flow fluctuations

Adding staff and associates.

Finding great candidates
Interviews
Hiring and keeping great employees
Office culture
Leadership vs. Management
Employees leave - firing/quitting/unemployment

Making Mistakes.

Malpractice Insurance
Ethics and professionalism

The good life.

Bringing balance to your life as a lawyer