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Divide and Conquer: How a Team-Teach Model Can Benefit Students and the Legal Writing Faculty



by

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I. Introduction

A. Our Audience: Legal writing professors teaching a two-semester or three-semester legal writing course.

B. Our Goal for:

1. Two-semester professors: To provide information showing how a 3rd semester can be easily added.
2. Three-semester professors: To provide another model for comparison.

“Most LRW programs are only two semesters by default, not by design.”¹

“A three-semester program can be structured so that workloads are manageable for both students and instructors.”²

¹Randall S. Abate, *The Third Time is the Charm*, 16 THE SECOND DRAFT 7 (May 2002).

²*Id.*

II. What is the “Relay Team Teach” model?

Lewis & Clark Law School’s Relay Team Teach Model	Possible Alterations to the Relay Team Teach Model
<p>A. Four (legal writing) professors</p> <p>B. Four subjects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statutes 2. Contracts 3. Judicial Opinions 4. Correspondence <p>C. Four major writing assignments (one for each subject unit)</p> <p>D. Four peer reviews (one for each unit)</p> <p>E. “Oral Presentation” component</p> <p>F. Student evaluations (each professor is evaluated separately at the end of the semester)</p> <p>G. Grading (professors meet—a student’s four separate unit grades averaged for single class grade)</p>	<p>A. Three or Five (adjunct) professors</p> <p>B. Three or Five (different) subjects</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drafting a will 2. _____ 3. _____ <p>C. Possibly replace with shorter (but more numerous) writing assignments</p> <p>D. Possibly add student-professor conferences</p> <p>E. Omit “oral presentation” component</p> <p>F. Student evaluations (evaluations done at the end of each unit rather than at the end of the semester)</p>

<u>Additional class details:</u> a. elective class b. seminar class of up to 16 c. offered spring and fall d. graded A-F e. 3 credit hours	
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III. What other models are possible?

#1: No 3 rd Semester	#2: Elective “ <u>Relay Team Teach</u> ” Model	#3: Elective “ <u>Solo Rotating</u> ” Model ³	#4: Required “ <u>Standard-- Separately Teach</u> ” Model ⁴	#5: Possible “ <u>Group Team Teach</u> ” Model
	Each member of the legal writing faculty teaches only part of the 3 rd semester.	Each member of the legal writing faculty teaches the entire 3 rd semester on a rotating basis.	Each member of the legal writing faculty teaches the entire 3 rd semester in his or her own separate class.	All members are in class together throughout the entire 3 rd semester teaching as a group.
	<u>Fall '04:</u> Bill (2 wks)-> Anne (2 wks)-> Beth (2 wks)-> Toni (2 wks)	<u>Fall '04:</u> Bill <u>Spr '05:</u> Anne	<u>Fall '04:</u> Bill (own class) ----- Anne (own class) ----- Beth (own class) ----- Toni (own class)	<u>Fall '04:</u> Bill+Anne+Beth +Toni (together)

³This approach is used at Western New England College School of Law. Jeanne Kaiser & Beth Cohen, *An Elective Advanced Course*, 16 THE SECOND DRAFT 13 (May 2002).

⁴Randall S. Abate, *The Third Time is the Charm*, 16 THE SECOND DRAFT 7 (May 2002).

IV. What are the benefits of a “Relay Team Teach” model?

A. Benefits to *legal writing professors*:

1. Division of Labor:

- a. Less *time* commitment--preparing curriculum, making handouts, teaching class, and grading assignments for only a part of the entire course
- b. Manageable *workload*

2. Specialization:

- a. become an “expert” in a subject
- b. publish articles and give lectures
- c. achieve job satisfaction by being an “expert” and publishing

3. Flexibility:

- a. choose your subject (e.g., statutes, contracts, judicial opinions)
- b. switch subject (e.g., from teaching “statutes” to “contracts”)
- c. take a break and your position is easily filled because the incoming professor need only teach a part of the course rather than the entire course

4. Enhanced Status:

- a. you are an “expert”
- b. you publish
- c. you teach an additional class (“Advanced Legal Writing”)

B. Benefits to *law students*:

- 1. Access to “experts” for each subject
- 2. Exposure to different teaching styles
- 3. Exposure to different experiences

4. More student interest because of diverse teaching styles and experiences

V. What are some questions to consider?

A. Is there *a need* for a third semester?

B. Is there *a desire* to use the “Relay Team Teach” approach?

C. What *degree of coordination* is optimal? Weekly meetings? Monthly meetings? No meetings?

D. Is a designated *coordinator* needed? If yes, what are the coordinator’s duties?

E. Who creates the *curriculum*? The coordinator create the curriculum for the entire course? Or each professor for the individual unit?

F. If each professor creates the curriculum for the unit he or she teaches, are the various units consistent?

1. Do the professors agree on the number of major writing assignments for each unit? One? Two?
2. Do the professors use the same grading formula?
3. Do the professors agree on the penalty for missed classes, late assignments, and other problems?
4. Do all professors give extra credit for class participation?

VI. What degrees of coordination are possible?

<i>No coordination</i>	<i>Flexible coordination</i>	<i>Close coordination</i>
1. No coordinator	1. "First among equals" coordinator	1. "Supreme commander" coordinator
2. No formal (or informal) meetings	2. Pre-class and post-class meetings (ideas exchanged using email and informal lunches)	2. Weekly or monthly (or some periodic) meetings
3. No policy	3. Voluntary "sit-in-on-other-section-classes" policy	3. Mandatory "sit-in-on-other-section-classes" policy
4. No "Introduction" class	4. Voluntary presence at the first class (the "Introduction" class--to acquaint the students with the "Relay Team Teach" approach)	4. Mandatory presence of all professors at the first class (the "Introduction" class)
This approach probably should be avoided	Some factors relevant to this approach: a. your time is limited b. legal writing	Some factors relevant to this approach: a. you have time to spare b. adjuncts teach

	professors teach c. the professors are already “experts” in a subject area	c. no “experts
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VII. What can help make the relay team teach approach smoother?

A. Have students create name

Unit Descriptions

I. STATUTES UNIT

A. Goal:

Students will be effective drafters and interpreters of statutes.

B. Methodology and Activities:

1. Examine federal and state statutes and city ordinances.
2. Role play as members of a special interest or as experts to debate the language of a bill.
3. Read case opinions that use or address statutory tools of interpretation.
4. Writing assignment: Draft a plagiarism statute.

II. CONTRACTS UNIT

A. Goal:

Students will understand the central role of contracts in society and be able to draft a contract that meets the needs of the parties.

B. Methodology and Activities:

1. Examine contracts brought in by the students.
2. Critique a home inspection contract.
3. Role play to negotiate terms of a contract.
4. Examine issues of interpretation involving contracts.
5. Writing assignment: Draft an employment contract.

III. JUDICIAL OPINIONS UNIT

A. Goal:

Students recognize that judicial opinion writing is “persuasive” writing that is shaped by various considerations.

B. Methodology and Activities:

1. Examine writing tools that make a judicial opinion persuasive.
2. Understand how organization and substantive content choices help make an opinion persuasive.
3. Review various considerations relevant to a judicial opinion including the law, the facts, the standards of review, bias, the role of the court, the audience, and judicial opinion writing conventions.
4. Writing Assignment: Write a judicial opinion (including a majority opinion and a dissent or concurrence) after listening to oral arguments and reading the briefs of an Oregon Supreme Court case argued at Lewis & Clark Law School.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE UNIT

A. Goal:

Students will be able to write clear and effective letters to a wide range of individuals.

B. Methodology and Activities:

1. Review the various types of letters that attorneys write to various actors including clients, opposing counsel, government agencies, the press, the courts, and perhaps even their own supervisors and employers.
2. Understand the role of audience expectations, word choice, style and other considerations in writing a letter.

3. Discuss ethical issues including the pitfalls of e-mail correspondence.

4. Writing Assignment: Write an opinion letter answering a legal question asked by a local high school student.