

LEGAL RESEARCH and WRITING

Teaching Assistants for 2010 – 2011 WANTED

Please Submit

**Cover Letter, Resume, GPA,
and LRW I & II Grades**

to

**Professor Susan Adams
(electronic or paper)**

by

March 31, 2010

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GENERAL INFORMATION FOR T.A. APPLICANTS

Many applicants for the position of Legal Writing Teaching Assistant have only a vague notion of what the T.A.'s responsibilities are, how they work with the professor and students, how much time the job takes, and how they are compensated. We would like you to have as much information as possible before undertaking this rewarding, but demanding, position. So here are some answers to the most common-asked questions:

1. What do Teaching Assistants Do?¹

Legal Writing Assistants have two main areas of responsibility: working with the professor and working with the students. These are both important, but your primary role is to assist the professor in preparing for and teaching the class and for correcting some aspects of student work. The work you do for the professor will vary depending on the professor's needs, your interests and strengths, and the stage of the course. You may be asked to perform any or all of the following tasks: teach some portion of the citation training, participate in research training classes and look over student exercises, conduct library tours; help develop ideas for assignments, research assignment ideas, prepare a sample memorandum, grade assignments for cite-form, and conduct practice oral arguments. In addition, all T.A.s are expected to serve as judges for the first round of the first-year Charles Evans Hughes appellate oral advocacy exercise in the spring and must draft a bench memo to be distributed to the judges (in conjunction with at least one other T.A.).

We encourage all legal writing professors to meet with their assigned T.A.s as early as possible to discuss their expectations for the job. Ideally, the professor and the T.A. would agree at the beginning of the semester as to exactly what the T.A. was expected to do, and when the work was to be completed. We want the T.A.s to be used to their best advantage and to draw on their particular skills and talents. Those who have an interest in, and aptitude for, teaching may be asked to get more involved in the aspect, especially with the more mechanical aspects such as signals, string cites, etc. Those whose talents lie more in the area of research and writing, might be asked to do more extensive research on the assignments and prepare a sample memo. Most T.A.s are asked to participate in grading papers in some manner – usually to grade for cite-form and format. These are things that you should work out with your individual professor before the semester begins.

Of course, teaching assistants are required to complete all assignments in a timely and professional manner. Your professor has responsibilities and deadlines, and is

¹ After we select teaching assistants, we will schedule an orientation session, held on the Saturday before classes begin in August. At this meeting, we will brief teaching assistants on some important teaching techniques and clarify all of the logistics of the job. This training session is mandatory.

relying on you to help meet them. If you do not do what is expected of you, you will be letting down the professor as well as the students.

In addition to the work they perform for the professor, all teaching assistants are expected to be available to counsel students on their writing, to go over drafts, answer ALWD Manual questions, etc. We recommend that the T.A. have at least two hours set aside each week when he or she will be available at a particular place (e.g., the professor's office or the cafeteria) to talk with students. A T.A. should also be willing to answer student questions by email or even on the phone at home at specified times. Although we want you to be reasonably available to students, they should not expect unlimited access to their T.A. You have a right to decide how much time (beyond the minimum two hours a week) you are willing to spend counseling individual students.

2. T.A.s are either 3rd or 4th year students

Qualifications for the position include high grades in Legal Research & Writing I and II and a strong GPA. While either law review or moot court experience is useful, it is not required. Of course, the willingness to work with first-year students with patience and understanding is an essential attribute of the effective Legal Research & Writing T.A.

3. What is the compensation for the job?

The compensation scheme is currently under review and details of various options, if any, will be forthcoming soon. BASICALLY, TAs ARE COMPENSATED FOR TWO CREDITS; WHETHER THIS MUST COME AS CASH, A SCHOLARSHIP, OR A COMBINATION IS TBA.

4. Must I attend all the Legal Writing classes? What if I have a conflict?

You should be prepared to attend all classes, although you may have unavoidable conflicts from time to time. Attending class is the only way to insure that you are fully apprised of everything the professor has told the students and that you understand the professor's approach to research and writing. Class attendance also promotes the notion that the T.A. is involved in, and is an integral part of, the legal writing course. If you have a partial class conflict (e.g., one hour, one day a week), you may serve as a T.A., so long as the professor agrees.

5. How much time will the job take?

The time demands of the job will vary depending on the time of year and the particular instructor with whom you are working. You should be prepared, however, to spend an average of ten hours a week. Some weeks you will spend considerably more time, other weeks considerably less. While the overall time demands of the job are likely to exceed the amount of time you would normally devote to a 2-credit course, remember that you are also getting paid for your work. Considered in this light, the commitment is

not unreasonable. We have tried to impress upon the legal writing professors the importance of clearly establishing expectations and deadlines at the beginning of each semester. In establishing these requirements, you and the professor should come to an agreement as to how long it will reasonably take you to complete an assignment. If you find that it is taking you significantly longer than you anticipated to complete a task and you don't think you can make the deadline, contact your professor as soon as possible to see if the task can be modified or the deadline extended. If you find over the course of the first two months that you are devoting so much time to the job that it will necessarily require far more than the recommended 140 hours by the end of the semester, talk to your professor. Keep in mind, however, that there are ebbs and flows to the job. Some weeks it may take 20 hours, other weeks only two or three hours.

6. Can I be a T.A. and work part-time?

Obviously, if you are an evening division student we expect that you will be working full or part time. We have some concerns, however, when day-division students hold part-time jobs outside of school. This is a situation that has caused some problems in the past. As well-meaning as the T.A. is, there may be times when a deadline at the outside job conflicts with a deadline at the school. Another problem associated with outside jobs is that the T.A. is not around school enough to be available to students.

7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the job?

Like any job, being a T.A. has both interesting and tedious aspects. For individuals who like doing research, writing, and thinking about the law, and who like to impart their knowledge to others, the job can be extremely interesting and fulfilling. It gives you an opportunity to try teaching, to use your knowledge to benefit others, and to polish your own legal writing and research skills in the process. Probably the least interesting aspects of the job is grading papers. Many T.A.s comment that they find it extremely useful to have this refresher just prior to entering practice. In addition, it provides an interesting "line" on your resume! There may, however, be times when first-year students can be extremely demanding of your time and attention. Remember that you can say "no" at some point.