



LawShelf Educational Media

Basics of Civil Litigation

Course Description

This course is a survey of the civil litigation process, from the filing through appeals. In addition to the mechanics of the civil litigation system, the course includes an overview of the American court system, both on the state and federal levels. It also focuses on questions of jurisdiction and venue.

Course Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- Describe the structure of the American court system, including the roles of the federal and state court systems;
- Apply the rules of jurisdiction and venue;
- Define and describe the various types of pleadings and parties relevant to a civil action;
- Explain the rules and procedures relevant to a civil case, including jury selection, burden of proof, presentation of evidence, and jury instructions;
- Determine the available steps after a judgment is rendered in a civil case.

Final Exam

Grades and credit recommendations are based solely on a final exam. When students are ready to take the final exam, they should register for a LawShelf account (or simply log in, for those with existing accounts). Go to the video-course page and click “Take the Final Exam” and pay the exam fee, where applicable. Students will be given instructions on how to take the exam. All exams are proctored by the Voice Proctor® proctoring system. An overview of the system is [provided here](#) and it requires no training or learning curve. Grades of 70% or above are considered passing grades and qualify for recommended transfer credit.

The final exam is based on the video course modules. Additional resources detailed in this syllabus are helpful for background and for building greater understanding of the course materials.

Inquiries can be made through the LawShelf Contact form on our website by clicking the “email

us” button that appears at the bottom of most LawShelf pages. Transcripts can be ordered via Parchment, as detailed on our website.

Case Studies

Many LawShelf video courses include case studies. These do not necessarily teach new material but are meant to demonstrate how the materials covered in the course are applied by various courts. Concepts covered in the case studies are covered on the final exam; so watching the case studies is necessary before taking the exam. However, it is unnecessary to memorize the facts and details of the cases covered in these case studies.

Self-Quizzes

Video-course modules and case studies feature self-quizzes that consist of practice questions on the materials covered in the videos. These questions are presented for the benefit of the student and are **important to review before taking the final exam** because they are similar in style and substance to the questions on the final exam. These quizzes are not graded or monitored and there is no record of how students answer these questions. Students may answer these questions as many times as they like and are encouraged to keep re-taking the quizzes until they have mastered all the questions.

Study Guide

Introductory Videos

These videos provide background to help students better understand the main parts of the course, which are the video-course modules below.

The American System of Government: Separation of Powers

<https://lawshelf.com/shortvideoscontentview/the-american-system-of-government-separation-of-powers>

Civil Procedure: How to Draft a Well-Pleaded Complaint

<https://lawshelf.com/shortvideoscontentview/civil-procedure-how-to-draft-a-well-pleaded-complaint/>

Drafting an Answer to a Civil Complaint

<https://lawshelf.com/shortvideoscontentview/drafting-an-answer-to-a-civil-complaint/>

Courseware Readings

These courseware readings provide background to help students better understand the main parts of the course, which are the video-course modules below.

Read the following sections of “Foundations of Law” courseware:

<https://lawshelf.com/coursewareview>

Legal Research and Writing

United States Legal System – Judicial Structure

Introduction and Separation of Powers:

<https://lawshelf.com/coursewarecontentview/introduction-and-separation-of-powers>

Federalism and the Difference Between the Federal and State Judicial

Sources of Law: <https://lawshelf.com/coursewarecontentview/Federalism-and-the-Difference-Between-the-Federal-and-State-Judicial-Sources-of-Law>

Case Law: <https://lawshelf.com/coursewarecontentview/case-law>

Civil Litigation

<https://lawshelf.com/coursewareview/civil-litigation>

The following chapters:

- Jurisdiction
- Venue, the Erie Doctrine and Choice of Law
- Pre-trial Practice
- Trial Practice
- Post-Trial Practice, Appeals and Class Actions

Video Course Modules

These videos constitute the main part of the course and are they sources of the questions on the final exam.

Basics of Civil Litigation Introduction

<https://lawshelf.com/videocoursescontentview/basics-of-civil-litigation/>

The American Court System - Module 1 of 5

<https://lawshelf.com/videocoursesmoduleview/the-american-court-system-module-1-of-5/>

Pleadings and Motions - Module 2 of 5

<https://lawshelf.com/videocoursesmoduleview/pleadings-and-motions-module-2-of-5/>

Pre-Trial Practice-Module 3 of 5

<https://lawshelf.com/videocoursesmoduleview/pre-trial-practice-module-3-of-5/>

Trials and Judgements – Module 4 of 5

<https://lawshelf.com/videocoursescontentview/basics-of-civil-litigation/>

Post Judgement Actions - Module 5 of 5

<https://lawshelf.com/videocoursesmoduleview/post-judgement-actions-module-5-of-5/>

Case Study: Press Energy Services v. Ruiz

<https://lawshelf.com/videocoursesmoduleview/case-study-press-energy-services-v-ruiz>

Case Study: Johnson v. Tuff N Rumble Mgmt, Inc.

<https://lawshelf.com/videocoursesmoduleview/case-study-johnson-v-tuff-n-rumble-mgmt-inc>

Supplemental Suggested Readings

These materials enable students to achieve a deeper understanding of the course materials and in applying the course to real-life situations.

Introduction to the Federal Court System (from the United States Dept. of Justice)

<https://www.justice.gov/usao/justice-101/federal-courts>

How Courts Work, by the American Bar Association

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/resources/law_related_education_network/how_courts_work/casediagram/

The following sections are important for civil litigation:

- **Diagram of How a Case Moves Through the Courts**
- **Civil and Criminal Cases**
- **Settling Cases**
- **Pre-trial Procedures in Civil Cases**
- **Jurisdiction and Venue**
- **Pleadings**
- **Motions**
- **Discovery**
- **Pre-Trial Conferences**
- **Civil and Criminal Trials**
- **Officers of the Court**
- **The Jury Pool**
- **Selecting the Jury**
- **Opening Statements**
- **Evidence**
- **Direct Examination**
- **Cross-examination**
- **Motion for Directed Verdict/Dismissal**
- **Presentation of Evidence by the Defense**
- **Rebuttal**
- **Final Motions**
- **Closing Arguments**
- **Instructions to the Jury**
- **Mistrials**
- **Jury Deliberations**
- **Verdict**
- **Motions after Verdict**
- **Judgment**
- **Sentencing**
- **Appeals**