



# NASHVILLE SCHOOL *of* LAW

EDUCATING TENNESSEE'S LAWYERS SINCE 1911

## RIGOROUS WRITING REQUIREMENT

*Pursuing writing excellence through a mentor-led writing project  
at Nashville School of Law*

### **BASIC INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES**

The writing mentor program is an independent study course designed to satisfy Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 7, § 2.03(f)(2)(C)'s requirement that students complete "at least one rigorous writing experience" before graduation. Its goal is to pair each second-year student with a judge or attorney in Tennessee who will act as a mentor and advisor as the student completes a significant research paper or a series of related papers of substantial length and sophistication. The judges and attorneys serving as writing mentors will be ones whose skill and effectiveness in legal research and writing are recognized and acknowledged in the legal community.

Successful completion of this independent study exercise is a requirement for graduation for all students entering their second year in 2017. The project will be completed in phases over approximately a two-year period, and the writing mentor will assist the student through each phase of the project. The project will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Upon successful completion of their project, students will earn two credit hours.

The topic of the writing project must be legal in nature and should, to the greatest extent possible, be practically oriented. In other words, the project should be helpful to all or some portion of Tennessee's legal community. The following are illustrative examples of appropriate project topics:

- A 50-state survey of law on a particular question
- An in-depth examination of a recent court decision that discusses how the decision affects the state of the law in Tennessee
- An in-depth examination of a specific legal doctrine or principle that compares the doctrine and its application in Tennessee with the application of the doctrine in other jurisdictions
- An in-depth comparison of state and federal law on a particular subject
- A historical examination of a legal doctrine that traces the history and current state of the doctrine and its application in Tennessee

- A biographical article about a judge or lawyer who has had a significant impact on the law in Tennessee or Tennessee’s legal community
- An article advocating a change to existing Tennessee law that presents in-depth discussion regarding the reasons for the change

This list is by no means exhaustive. It is simply intended to give students and their writing mentors a sense of appropriate projects. The student and his or her mentor are encouraged to collaborate to identify the topic and the nature of the project and to be creative in selecting an appropriate topic.

### **TIMELINE**

For students who begin their second year of law school in August 2017, the following time line for their writing project must be followed. For third-year students taking the class as an elective, a modified timeline will be established.

<i><b>Deadline</b></i>	<i><b>Item</b></i>
<b>1. November 3, 2017</b>	<b>Initial Meeting with Writing Mentor.</b> The student must hold an initial meeting with his or her writing mentor. The student should come to this meeting with ideas regarding possible topics but should be prepared to discuss other topics suggested by the mentor. Students should leave this meeting with one or more possible topics that merit further consideration regarding their suitability. This initial meeting may be brief; 15 to 30 minutes will likely be sufficient. <i>All these steps should be completed on or before November 3, 2017.</i>
<b>2. January 19, 2018</b>	<b>Topic Proposal.</b> The student should provide a written proposal to his or her writing mentor detailing the student’s proposed topic and the scope and type of the planned writing topic. The writing mentor should either approve the topic’s viability or suggest appropriate modifications. These communications may be accomplished in a telephone call, by email, or in an in-person meeting. If the student’s proposal is not viable or requires modifications, the writing mentor should provide the student with appropriate suggestions and should provide the student a deadline within which to make the suggested revisions. This deadline should not affect the timeline for completion of the project. As soon as the writing mentor has approved the topic, the student must provide the final topic proposal to the writing mentor and the Director of Academic Affairs and Legal Writing. <i>The submission of the approved final topic proposal to TWEN should be completed on or before January 19, 2018.</i>
<b>3. June 22, 2018</b>	<b>Outline and Outline Meeting.</b> The student should prepare a detailed written outline, including the general structure for the project and a list of sources the student plans to rely upon. After

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reading and considering the student's outline, the writing mentor should meet with the student to discuss the outline in detail and to suggest modifications and additional resources as necessary. This meeting may be brief; 20 to 30 minutes may be sufficient. If the outline is not sufficient, a revised outline must be submitted within 30 days. This deadline should not affect the timeline for completion of the project. *Students should submit their outline to their writing mentor, the meeting to discuss the outline should be held, and the writing mentor should approve the original or revised outline on or before June 22, 2018.*

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**4. Ongoing Advice and Guidance as Necessary.** Between the approval of the outline and the student's submission of a first draft, the writing mentor should be reasonably available to the student, by either email, telephone, or personal meeting, to answer questions or concerns or to give advice about the progress of the project.

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**5. Draft: 10/26/18 Meet: 12/21/18** **First Draft and First Draft Meeting.** The student must prepare a first draft of his or her project and submit it to the writing mentor for review and comment. This draft must be a complete draft in sentence form (not in note or outline form), and it should represent the student's best possible work up to this point. The writing mentor should not meet with the student if the draft does not reflect a good faith effort or if it is not sufficient for any other reason (for instance, because it is still in outline or note form). If the first draft is not acceptable, the writing mentor should explain the deficiencies to the student and should set a deadline for the submission of a revised first draft. This revision should not affect the timeline for completion of the project. Once the student has submitted an acceptable first draft, the writing mentor should consider it carefully and meet with the student to discuss the draft. Both the student and the writing mentor should approach the first draft expecting that substantial changes will be made to improve the quality of the work. For instance, sections may need to be rearranged; old sections may need to be revised or removed; new sections may need to be added; or additional sources may need to be consulted. The mentor's comments and suggestions should be more than proofreading. In the meeting, the mentor should provide the student with substantial feedback and engage the student in a discussion regarding ways to improve the draft. *The student should submit the first draft to the writing mentor whenever it is complete but no later than October 26, 2018, and the meetings to discuss the first draft should be held as soon as practicable after the draft's submission, but not later than December 21, 2018.*

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**6. Ongoing Advice and Guidance as Necessary.** Between the meeting regarding the first draft and the deadline for submitting the final draft, the writing mentor should be reasonably available to the

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student, by either email, telephone, or personal meeting, to answer questions or concerns or to give advice about the progress of the project.

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**7. May 17, 2019**      **Completion and Submission of the Final Draft.** The final draft of the writing project should incorporate the suggestions the student received from the writing mentor at the first draft meeting, as well as any suggestions and comments from the writing mentor at subsequent meetings. The final draft is the culmination of the project and should represent the student's best effort to bring the project to a successful completion. *The student must submit the final draft to the writing mentor and upload a copy of the final draft to TWEN for review by the Director of Academic Affairs and Legal Writing by no later than May 17, 2019.*

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**8.**      Meeting:      **Evaluation by the Writing Mentor.** Upon receipt of the student's final draft, the writing mentor should carefully read the final draft and should meet with the student one final time to discuss the final product and to provide advice regarding future writing projects. The writing mentor must also complete an evaluation of the student's work on an evaluation form provided by the school. This evaluation shall include the writing mentor's recommendation regarding whether the student should pass or fail. Copies of the evaluation will be provided to the student and the Director of Academic Affairs and Legal Writing. *The legal writing mentor's meeting with the student should occur no later than August 16, 2019, and the evaluation should be sent to the student and the Director of Academic Affairs and Legal Writing no later than September 13, 2019.*

**8/16/19**  
Evaluation:      **9/13/19**

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**9.      October 31, 2019**      **Acceptance and Final Grade.** While the writing mentor's evaluation will contain a recommended grade, the Director of Academic Affairs and Legal Writing has the final authority to determine whether a student's project passes or fails. *The Director shall notify the student of the grade received for the project on or before October 31, 2019.*

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**10**      Resubmitted      **Resubmitted Projects.** Upon determining that a student's Project:      final work product is not acceptable, the Director of Academic Affairs and Legal Writing shall inform the student in writing that the work is not acceptable and shall provide the student with the basis for the decision. In the Director's discretion, a student whose Final Grade:      project has not been accepted may be allowed additional time to work further on the project and to submit it for reconsideration. The Director shall promptly review and give a final grade to the resubmitted project. *Resubmitted projects must be received by the Director no later than January 31, 2020, and the final grade shall be awarded by no later than February 28, 2020.*

**1/31/2020**  
                    **2/28/20**

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## FORMAT

The research paper or series of related research papers must be a minimum of 5,000 words (approximately 20 pages), but students are encouraged to write longer works if the nature of the topic requires it. The document(s) should adhere to the following format guidelines:

**Typeface.** The text of the document(s) must be printed using black ink with a sharp, dark image. The typeface should be 12-point Times New Roman.

**Margins.** The document(s) must be single-sided with one-inch margins on the top, bottom, left, and right side of each page.

**Line Spacing.** The body of the document(s) must be double-spaced. Long quotations must be indented and single-spaced.

**Pagination.** All pages must be numbered at the bottom center of the page with the exception of the title page. Acknowledgment pages and the table of contents, if any, may be numbered as i, ii, iii, iv, etc., so that page 1 is the actual first page of the text.

**Citations to Authority.** The document must contain proper citations to authority, but the specifics of the citations may vary depending on the nature of the project. Citations should conform to the citation rules governing non-academic legal documents in the most current edition of *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* unless the nature of the project calls for another form of citation.

**Footnotes and Endnotes.** Footnotes and endnotes should be single-spaced using the Times New Roman 11-point font. Footnote and separate paragraphs within a footnote should be double-spaced. All legal citations in footnotes or endnotes should conform to the citation rules governing non-academic legal documents in the most current edition of *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* unless the nature of the project calls for another form of citation.

**Tables, graphs, and photographs.** Scans of tables, graphs, and photographs may be included in the document(s), provided that the margin requirements are properly observed. Tables, graphs, and photographs may be reproduced in color, provided that the print is sharp, clean, clear, and dark. Tables, charts, or graphs that are too large to fit within the margins may be folded and mounted on a blank, appropriately numbered sheet.

**Title Page.** Follow the sample title page shown below for the format of the title page. The actual title page of your document is to be 8½" x 11." Replace the sample title "REOPENING TENNESSEE'S OPEN COURTS CLAUSE" with the title of your paper; replace the "JANE S. DOE" with your own name; and replace the "20\_\_" with the year in which you submit the final version of your project. Do not number the title page.

## Sample Title Page

[Center the following on an 8½" x 11" page, using your own title and name]

### REOPENING TENNESSEE'S OPEN COURTS CLAUSE

by

JANE S. DOE

Submitted in fulfillment of the rigorous

writing requirement for the degree of

JURIS DOCTOR

at the

NASHVILLE SCHOOL OF LAW

20\_\_

### **JOURNALING AND TIMEKEEPING**

The writing mentor program is a two-credit hour course. Accordingly, students are expected to devote not less than 130 hours to selecting their topic, conducting the necessary research, writing and re-writing their paper(s), and meeting with their writing mentor. Students are, therefore, required to review their journal with their writing mentor and the Director of Academic Affairs and Legal Writing every six months or when requested.

### **GRADING AND RECOGNITION**

These legal writing projects will be graded on a pass/fail basis. A pass/fail grade will be given at the conclusion of the first year and a student must pass to continue on to the second year of the project. The writing mentor will suggest a grade in his or her final evaluation of the student's work. However, the Director of Academic Affairs and Legal Writing will have the final authority to grant a passing or failing grade on the project. A failing grade on either year of the project will require repeating that portion of the course.

Students who, in the opinion of the school, produce superior work will be recognized. This recognition will include acknowledgment at graduation and in *The Torch*, publication of the work on the school's website, and either a monetary award or tuition credit. The School also will assist in other publication opportunities as warranted.

### **APPLICATION OF THE HONOR CODE**

The preparation of the paper(s) required for this program is covered by the Nashville School of

Law's Honor Code. Students should be particularly mindful of Article IV(B) regarding unauthorized collaboration and Article IV(F) regarding plagiarism. Consulting with the student's writing mentor will not be considered "unauthorized help."

Students should do their own work and give credit where credit is due. That is, (1) do not present as your own anyone else's ideas, words, graphical, or pictorial representations and (2) identify all sources relied upon in preparing your paper(s). Use quotation marks and a citation to identify language taken verbatim from a source and use citations alone to identify any paraphrased language or borrowed ideas. Err on the side of caution, and if in doubt, ask the Director of Academic Affairs and Legal Writing for guidance and clarification.

When students submit a final copy of their paper(s) to the Director of Academic Affairs and Legal Writing, they will be deemed to have made the pledge in Article III of the Honor Code that "On my honor, I pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work, and that I have followed and will continue to observe the Honor Code regarding it."