

Guidelines for Independent Research Papers **Supervised by Professor Connolly**

Introduction: In order to receive a J.D. from the University of South Carolina School of Law, a student must complete a “substantial legal research project.” *Law Student Handbook III.C*. One way you can satisfy this requirement is through faculty-supervised independent research. The resulting paper must be submitted in “final written form of approximately 30 to 50 pages in length, after the submission of an outline and draft that have been critiqued by the professor.” *Id.* This document provides guidance as to how I supervise independent writing.

Two-Way Commitment: I view the paper-writing process as an integral part of your legal education, and acknowledge that such an endeavor (if properly undertaken) requires a significant investment of time and energy on your part. Good writing is not easy. To this end, if you undertake to work with me on an independent research paper, I commit to invest my own time and energy to help you create excellent work. I also believe that, given the amount of work required for any paper, my goal should be to assist you in producing an original scholarly work that may be eligible for publication.

Required Reading: Students completing independent research papers under my supervision must read *Writing a Student Article* by Professor Eugene Volokh at 48 J. LEGAL ED. 247 (1998). All writers have a duty to produce original work and give credit to others when drawing on their ideas. I assume that no one at USC School of Law would deliberately commit plagiarism in this exercise or any other course. However, to avoid inadvertent plagiarism, I require you to read materials available on St Louis University School of Law’s Plagiarism Policy at <http://law.slu.edu/policies/plagiarism.html> and Legal Writing Institute’s web site “Law School Plagiarism v. Proper Attribution,” at <http://www.lwionline.org/publications/plagiarism/policy.pdf>. Submission of a draft paper certifies that you have fully reviewed and understand the materials from these two sources, as well as Professor Volokh’s article. You will also need to have (and use) a citation handbook, either THE BLUEBOOK, A UNIFORM SYSTEM OF CITATION, or ALWD CITATION MANUAL, A PROFESSIONAL SYSTEM OF CITATION.

Milestones: For me, concrete “milestones” produce the best possible product in the time allotted. To that end, I require students engaged in independent writing under my supervision to submit documents and hold requisite meetings as set forth below (only those headings in bold are absolute requirements):

- 1) **Topic proposal** (due approximately 1 week after semester commences)
 - a. You provide: a paragraph setting forth what topic your paper will cover, with particular attention to your proposed area of analysis. Your topic is not set in stone at this time – your preliminary research may lead you to refine (or even significantly amend) your proposal
 - b. I provide: approval and suggestions regarding research
 - c. Meeting: you must meet with me at least once (in person if possible, or by telephone if necessary) following submission of the proposal
- 2) **Preliminary outline** (due approximately 2 weeks later)
 - a. You provide: a preliminary outline of the paper, with attention to what area you propose for “original scholarly work”
 - b. I provide: feedback, including further suggestions regarding research
 - c. Meeting: optional, not required
- 3) **Detailed outline and detailed current bibliography** in “bluebook” form (due about 3 weeks later)
 - a. You provide: an outline of the paper, with detailed attention to the area of your “original scholarly work.” You must also submit a bibliography setting forth any materials you intend to cite, using proper citation format (seems painful now, but will be a time-saver down the road, I promise...)
 - b. I provide: feedback and detailed suggestions regarding research, additional sources, issues, etc.
 - c. Meeting: recommended but not required

- 4) **Draft** (due approximately 4 weeks later)
 - a. You provide: a full draft of the paper. Note – this should not be your first draft (see section III of Volokh article, above)
 - b. I provide: feedback and suggestions. I will do my best to provide feedback within 3-4 days
 - c. Meeting: at least one meeting is required following submission of your draft
- 4a) Revised Draft (no deadline) – optional, not required
- 5) **Final** (due before the last week of classes)
- 6) Revision before submission to potential publication sources (no deadline) – optional, not required
 - a. You provide: a revision
 - b. I provide: feedback and further suggestions
 - c. Meeting: optional, not required

Deadlines: When we mutually agree that I will supervise your independent study, you must provide suggested due dates based on the times set forth in the milestones above. I will review those times based on my calendar, to ensure that I can get meaningful, timely feedback to you based on my other obligations. Once we have agreed to dates, they become enforceable deadlines, and I reserve the right to reduce your grade based on unexcused late submissions. Excused delays will be granted only for unexpected, significant events, and (unless circumstances completely prevent it) must be approved in advance. If a document is transmitted via email, a submission will be considered timely if sent before midnight of the date in question.

Electronic Submissions: Your topic statement, outlines, and drafts (items 1-4 on the milestone list above) should be submitted to me via email (to connolly@law.sc.edu). I will typically (though perhaps not always) provide feedback in electronic form. **The final paper (for a grade) must be submitted in hard copy format and an electronic version.**

Communication: My goal is to help students prepare quality work. The meetings set forth above in the milestones are only minimum. I encourage you to chat with me, either in person, by phone, or by email, throughout the entire process. My contact information is listed at the end of this document.

Upshot: Writing and thinking analytically are integral to what most lawyers do, and your independent research paper should help you become a better lawyer. Nevertheless, as I said at the outset, writing is hard work. My job is not to make it easy. My job is, however, to facilitate and guide the process. I hope your research and writing experience will be (on balance) fun and meaningful.

Kim Diana Connolly, Associate Professor
University of South Carolina School of Law
Room 306
Phone: 803/777-6880
Fax: 803/777-3401

Associate Faculty, University of South Carolina School of the Environment
Director, Environmental Law Clinic
Associate Director, Department of Clinical Legal Studies