

Final Paper Requirements & Assessment Criteria

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1. **Miranda Warning:** For many students the seminar paper will be the most important, most scholarly research effort of their law school experience. This is the Doctor of Jurisprudence requirement that most closely parallels the writing requirements of non-law graduate degrees (e.g. a M.A. thesis).
2. **General Standard:** The final draft should be a finely polished document that is professional in appearance. It should reflect logical overall structure, meticulous and generous footnoting, and advanced command of the English language.
3. **Models:** Good examples of such efforts are the student notes and comments published regularly in our law review and in other law journals. *See, e.g.,* <https://harvardlawreview.org/>; or Hein-Online.
3. **Minimum Length:**
 - a. Your final paper must be at least approximately 8500 words, including footnotes.
 - b. Your final paper must contain at least 100 footnotes, including both citation footnotes and “speaking” footnotes.
4. **Minimum Format & Style:**
 - a. Submit the paper in PDF.
 - b. Both the substantive rough draft and the final paper must be double-spaced with one-inch margins all around.
 - b. The main text must be in 12-point Times font.
 - c. The footnotes must be single-spaced, in 9-point Times font, and in Bluebook form.
 - d. On the first page, center the title and your name under the title.
 - e. Include a table of contents showing page numbers for all headings and subheadings.

5. **Assessment Standards**

a. I will evaluate the papers using three primary criteria:

The quality of research: How complete is your examination of the relevant ethical/medical/legal sources? To what extent have you adequately uncovered and documented the information necessary to sustain your thesis?

The quality of analysis: To what extent have you have provided a well-structured argument in support of your thesis? How adequate is the evidence offered for each premise of this argument?

The quality of presentation: To what extent does your paper’s organizational structure effectively communicate its thesis? To what extent does your paper conform to the rules of grammar and style? To what extent has your paper been proofread? I grade grammar and style, not just “content,” because even the most brilliant content gets obscured by sloppy writing.

b. I will evaluate your submissions according to the matrix below.

Components of a 100 Point Paper	
Core Minimum Requirements	
PDF file format	10
8500 words	
100 footnotes	
Double-spaced with one-inch margins	
Main text in 12-point Times	
Footnotes in 9-point Times	
Table of contents	
Research - Content	
Writer uses key legal sources (e.g. <i>Roe v Wade</i> in a constitutional analysis of abortion).	
Writer uses the most relevant legal sources.	

Writer uses the most recent and up-to-date legal sources (e.g. a recent or ongoing federal appellate case on your issue).	10
Writer uses key non-legal sources.	
Writer uses the most relevant non-legal sources.	
Writer uses the most recent and up-to-date non-legal sources.	
Research - Citation	
Nearly every sentence you write, with the exception of matters of common knowledge (e.g., “grass is usually green”) and your own, unadulterated opinion, will require a footnote for substantiation and/or elaboration.	15
Writer cites directly to original sources (e.g. do not cite the <i>NYT</i> to substantiate a statute’s language).	
Writer supports every proposition of fact.	
Writer supports every proposition of law.	
Writer uses an appropriate number of footnotes (minimum 100).	
Footnotes use appropriate signals.	
Writer complies with the Bluebook.	
Analysis - Thesis	
Writer has an original, novel, and important thesis.	10
Writer explains how the thesis is original, novel, and important.	
Thesis is sufficiently narrow for writer to address in some detail within the available space	
Writer provides clear and succinct background sections that identify the legal and non-legal problems.	
Writer devotes at least 20% of the paper to adding something new.	
Writer moves beyond just describing the law to normative criticism, analysis, or synthesis.	
Analysis - Argumentation	
Writer offers cogent argumentation for asserted positions and claims.	25
Writer is fair and balanced in her treatment of opposing positions.	
Writer adequately addresses potential holes or flaws in facts and arguments. If facts cannot be filled in, or arguments cannot be adequately supported, writer notes this and identifies why this might be the case.	
Writer makes arguments with logic and persuasiveness.	
Writer’s descriptive and normative points are made with sophistication appropriate for a lawyer.	

Presentation – Macro Level	
Writer offers an attention-grabbing introduction.	15
Writer offers an introductory roadmap.	
Writer offers an appropriate amount of legal and factual background.	
The paper is of an appropriate length (minimum 8500).	
Writer uses not only citation footnotes but also speaking footnotes.	
Writer uses an appropriate number of headings at different levels.	
Writer uses descriptive headings in full sentences.	
Presentation – Micro Level	
Writer complies with the Bluebook.	15
Writer avoids spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.	
Writer avoids long paragraphs (>10 lines).	
Writer avoids long sentences (>25 words).	
Writer avoids orphan headings.	
Writer avoids the passive voice.	
Writer provides a clear reference for pronouns.	
Writer uses block quotes only sparingly.	
Writer does not rely on block quotes but restates the core takeaway in the main text.	
Writer eliminates excess words.	
Writer provides reader friendly transitions.	
Writer did one or more rounds of proofreading.	