

DE PAUL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Faculty  
**FROM:** Mark C. Weber  
**DATE:** December 9, 2003  
**RE:** New Course Proposals

Some faculty members have asked for guidance in proposing new courses. Acting on behalf of the Curriculum Committee, I would like to put forward some considerations for new course proposals.

Each proposal for a new course should include a *course title*, a *course description* for the bulletin (actually for the College of Law web page), a *memo* indicating why the course is needed, and a preliminary *syllabus*. If the course is to be taught by an adjunct, a copy of that person's c.v. should be included as well. Here are a few words about the first four of those items.

**A. Some considerations about titles:**

1. Shorter is better. Computerized transcripts have only a limited number of spaces to spell out course titles. To avoid having some registrar's assistant truncate your title into senselessness, keep it short.
2. Creativity is overrated. The title should make sense to someone reading a transcript thirty years from now, so it's better to avoid words that may not survive that long. The Morphogenesis of Subchapter C is not an ideal course title.
3. Remember your ABCs. Students frequently look for courses in an alphabetical list. They can find the course more easily if the first word of the title is subject matter-descriptive, rather than something else. "Law of" should thus be avoided if possible. (Sometimes, it's not possible: Law of the European Union was chosen over European Union Law to keep students from thinking the course dealt primarily with collective bargaining.)
4. Hurray for de-colonization. Course titles with colons in them (The Morphogenesis of Subchapter C: Post-Codification Hermeneutics) tend to be too long, too hard to find in an alphabetical list, and too often, obscure. There are exceptions, but most course titles with colons would be better without them.

**B. Regarding course descriptions:**

It is helpful if the course description is short (no more than three sentences), descriptive, and not unduly gaga on why the topic is the most important one in the curriculum. A list of topics covered by the course is very helpful to the students. Prerequisites, if any, should be listed.

### **C. The memo:**

This is the opportunity to be unduly gaga about why the topic is the most important one in the curriculum. The memo should indicate what curricular gap the course fills and why legal education will be so much the poorer without the course. If there is any potential overlap with any other course, the relationship of the two courses should be explained. If the course has proceeded through a specialty area committee on the road to development, the memo is the place to say so. So far, at least, the Curriculum Committee and the faculty as a whole have tended to give deference to proposals endorsed by the specialty area committees. If the course is to count as a Senior Research Seminar, that fact should be clear from the memo; in addition, the syllabus should conform to the Senior Research Seminar guidelines.

### **D. The syllabus:**

This fall, the Curriculum Committee adopted suggested guidelines to assist faculty members in preparing syllabi for course approval.

The Curriculum Committee urges instructors seeking new course approval to consider the following guidelines when preparing your syllabus. Each syllabus should ideally include the following information:

a) *Course Description*: details what will be covered substantively (topically and/or theoretically) in the course.

b) *Teaching Objective*: states what the instructor hopes to achieve through the course.

c) *Mode of Instruction*: describes what pedagogical method(s) the instructor will employ (i.e., lecture, Socratic-method case analysis, small group presentations, etc.)

d) *Course Materials*: identifies what required (and recommended) casebooks, texts, or other materials have been selected and how they will be made available for students.

e) *Evaluation*: elaborates course requirements and how students will be graded in the course. If there are multiple assignments, instructor should identify how each assignment will be weighted for the overall grade (i.e., class participation: 10%, midterm: 30%, problem assignments: 20%, final exam: 40%).

f) *Course Schedule* (optional): offers a week-by-week schedule of the anticipated cases, topics, and/or materials to be covered.

Copies of sample syllabi are readily available from the members of the Curriculum Committee, the Associate Dean, and your email (in previous course proposal materials for faculty meetings).

Thanks very much for your attention to these matters.