

LEGAL RESEARCH and WRITING

Teaching Assistants WANTED for 2023-2024

Applicants for first year legal writing courses or for the TA for the upper division legal writing courses, please submit an application form request via email to Ms. Roberta McLaurin, at rmclaurin@kentlaw.iit.edu.

You will need to submit a cover letter, your résumé, your GPA, and some or all of your legal writing grades, depending upon the position you seek.

DEADLINE FOR ALL TA APPLICATIONS: **Fri., June 9, 2023**

General Information for TA Applicants for the First Year Legal Writing Classes

Many applicants for the position of Legal Writing Teaching Assistant have only a vague notion of what the TA's responsibilities are, how they work with the professor and students, how much time the job takes, and how they are compensated. We would like you to have as much information as possible before undertaking this rewarding, but demanding, position. So here are some answers to the most common-asked questions:

1. What do Teaching Assistants Do?

Legal Writing Assistants have two main areas of responsibility: working with the professor and working with the students. These are both important, but your primary role is to assist the professor in preparing for and teaching the class and for correcting some aspects of student work. The work you do for the professor will vary depending on the professor's needs, your interests and strengths, and the stage of the course. Your professor may ask you to perform any of these tasks: teach the citation training, participate in research training classes and look over student exercises, conduct library tours, help develop ideas for writing and research assignments, grade assignments for cite form, and conduct practice oral arguments. In addition, all TAs are expected to serve as judges for the Charles Evans Hughes appellate oral advocacy program in the spring and may help draft a bench memo to be distributed to the judges.

We encourage all legal writing professors to meet with their assigned TAs early to discuss their expectations for the job. Ideally, the professor and the TA would agree at the beginning of the semester as to exactly what the TA was expected to do, and when the work was to be completed. We want the TAs to be used to their best advantage and to draw on their particular skills and talents. Those who have an interest in, and aptitude for, teaching may be asked to get more involved in the aspect, especially with the more mechanical aspects such as signals, string cites, etc. Most TAs are asked to participate in evaluating papers in some manner—usually to grade for cite form and format. These are things you should work out with your individual professor as the semester progresses.

Besides the work they perform for the professor, all teaching assistants are expected to be available to counsel students on their writing, to go over portions of drafts, answer ALWD Manual questions, and similar tasks. We recommend that the TA have at least one hour set aside each week when they will be available at a particular place (e.g., the cafeteria) to talk with students. A TA should also be willing to answer student questions by email. Although we want you to be reasonably available to students, they should not expect unlimited access to their TA. You may decide how much time (beyond the minimum one hour a week) you will spend counseling individual students.

2. What are the necessary qualifications to apply?

Legal Writing TAs must be either 3L or 4L students during the relevant academic year. Other qualifications for the position include high grades in Legal Writing I and II and a strong GPA. While either law review or moot court experience is useful, it is not required.

The willingness to work with first-year students with patience and understanding is an essential attribute of the effective Legal Research & Writing TA.

3. What is the compensation for the job?

TAs who assist with the first year legal writing classes are compensated \$1,100 per semester, paid in two equal installments each semester, one midway through the semester and one at the end of the semester. All compensation will be paid to you. TAs may keep the cash, or put it toward either one or two credits for the TAship if you so choose.

4. Must I attend all the Legal Writing classes? What if I have a conflict?

You should be prepared to attend at least one class each week, although you may have unavoidable conflicts occasionally. Class attendance promotes to the students that the TA is involved in, and an integral part of, the legal writing course. If you have a partial class conflict, you may serve as a TA if the professor agrees.

5. How much time will the job take?

The time demands of the job will vary depending on the time of year and the particular professor with whom you are working. Be prepared, however, to spend an average of seven hours a week. Some weeks you will spend considerably more time, other weeks considerably less. While the overall time demands of the job are likely to exceed the time you would normally devote to a 2-credit course, remember that you are also getting paid for your work. Considered in this light, the commitment is not unreasonable.

We try to impress upon the legal writing professors the importance of clearly establishing expectations and deadlines at the beginning of each semester. In establishing these requirements, you and the professor should come to an agreement on how long it will reasonably take you to complete an assignment. If you find it is taking you significantly longer than you anticipated to complete a task and you don't think you can make the deadline, contact your professor soon to see if the task can be modified or the deadline extended. If you find during the first two months that you are devoting so much time to the job that it will require far more than the recommended hours by the end of the semester, talk to your professor. Remember, however, that there are ebbs and flows to the job. Some weeks it may take 10 hours, other weeks only two or three hours.

6. Can I be a TA and work part-time?

If you are an evening division student we expect that you will be working full or part time. We have some concerns, however, when day-division students hold part-time jobs outside of school. This has caused some problems in the past. As well-meaning as the TA is, there may be times when a deadline at the outside job conflicts with a deadline at the school. Nonetheless, those who are adept at organizing their time have been able to manage a flexible part-time position and a TAship.

7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the job?

Being a TA allows you to take direct part in a group of 1Ls' educational experience, which can be immensely satisfying. Like any job, being a TA has both interesting and mundane aspects. For individuals who like doing research, writing, and thinking about the law, and who like to impart their knowledge to others, the job can be extremely interesting and fulfilling. It allows you to try teaching, to use your knowledge to benefit others, and to polish your own legal writing and research skills. Probably the least interesting aspect of the job is grading citation. However TAs comment that they find it extremely useful to have this refresher just prior to entering practice. In addition, it provides an interesting "line" on your résumé! There may, however, be times when first-year students can be demanding of your time and attention. Remember that you can say "no" at some point.

8. Mandatory TA Orientation

On a weekday afternoon during Chicago-Kent's orientation week, immediately before fall classes begin, there will be an orientation session lasting about three hours.

Additional Information for TA applicants for the Upper-Division Legal Writing Classes' TA

The upper-division legal writing TA reports to both Professor Silvestri and to Professor Morris, and is a 3rd or 4th year student who supports faculty teaching upper-division LRW courses, including Legal Writing 3, 4, and 4 Equivalency. The TA's primary responsibilities include making presentations, as requested by faculty, in Legal Writing 3 and 4 classrooms. This TA will also have administrative responsibilities in the Legal Writing 4 Research Equivalency courses, provide support for the Charles Evans Hughes moot court competition, and complete other responsibilities as discussed in advance with Professor Silvestri.

Time requirements are similar to those of the first-year TA positions. The upper-level legal writing TA is compensated \$1,100 per semester, paid in two equal installments each semester, one midway through the semester and one at the end of the semester. All compensation will be paid to you. TAs may keep the cash, or put it toward either one or two credits for the TAsip if you choose.