Course Information, Fall 2020

Course Title: BULE 402 – Commercial Law
Class Times: Online Asynchronous

Faculty Information

Instructor: Prof. Phillip Mink, J.D.
Office Hours: By appointment on zoom
Office: 9900 Main Street, Room 238 (will be used only by special request)
Email: pmink@gmu.edu

Text and Required Materials

Business Law and the Legal Environment, Beatty, Samuelson, Abril: 8th Edition (MindTap). You may access the text through our Blackboard page. Click on Mindtap in the left margin, and then click on “Business Law.”

Course Description

In this course you will learn to analyze business issues as lawyers do, with particular emphasis on contracts, employment discrimination, tort liability, and other topics of importance in the business world. Beyond legal content, students will learn how to express their ideas in clear, concise prose.

Approach to Learning

This is not a lecture course. Instead we will learn through readings, class interaction on Discussion Board, case analyses, and group projects. By the end of the semester, students should understand how to analyze case law and hypothetical scenarios involving challenging legal concepts.
Grading Policy

We will have four major projects. Each will count for 20 percent of your grade. Class participation will count for the remaining 20 percent.

We will measure class participation by entries on our Discussion Board and by several smaller projects. Participation also includes the tests from Mindtap.

Revision Policy for Major Projects

You may revise each of our major projects for higher grades. For example, if a paper earns a B- on the first draft, and the second draft earns an A, only the A will count.

Most Mindtap tests will have unlimited attempts options, so your grade should reflect that policy.

Teamwork

This class will emphasize teamwork, which is a core part of the School of Business’s mission. For our four major projects, you will work in groups. It is up to you to organize how your groups complete these projects.

Your professor is aware that many students do not like group work, often for good reasons. With that in mind he will do everything he can to ensure that your groups work smoothly and effectively. He will be particularly vigilant in ensuring that every group member carries their weight.

Course Communication via Email

Your professor is not allowed to communicate through Gmail or other private accounts, so he will communicate with you only through your GMU email. If you email me, your message must include an embedded signature. If you do not know how to do this, let me know and I’ll provide instructions.

CPA Review

If you are preparing for the CPA test, the School of Business recommends that you use the website called ThisWayToCPA.com, which is hosted by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. The site has a section entitled “Prepare for the Exam,” and it includes a second section called “Use the Free Stuff.” Business Law accounts for 10-20 percent of the Regulation section, one of four sections on the test. You will find the AICPA’s current description of the Business Law Section in this document beginning on page Reg 8.
BULE 402 is not intended to be a comprehensive prep course for the CPA Exam, but it is intended to provide you with an overview of how the legal system works and how lawyers, judges, and legislators address key business issues. In addition, we will cover several of the main topics included in the Business Law component of the CPA Exam, and we will master the writing skills that are essential to doing well on the Business Environment and Concepts (BEC) section of the exam. As the AICPA states:

Written communication tasks appear only in the BEC section of the CPA Exam. For each of three written communication tasks, you must read a scenario and then write an appropriate document relating to the scenario. The instructions state what form the document should take (such as a memo or letter) and its focus. Your response should provide the correct information in writing that is “clear, complete and professional.”

**This Syllabus is Not Set in Stone**

In all likelihood, your professor will alter this syllabus as the semester progresses. These changes will be dictated by your progress on the topics we are covering, your needs for the CPA Exam or other professional requirements, and your ability to communicate effectively in writing. You will have plenty of time to prepare for any changes, and they will not affect your grade.

**School of Business Undergraduate Program Learning Goals**

Every course in the School of Business includes these goals:

1. Our students will demonstrate an understanding of the social, global, ethical, and legal contexts of business and will be able to reflect on the role of the individual in business.

2. Our students will demonstrate an understanding of and the ability to apply knowledge of professional skills necessary for success in business including effective business writing.

3. Our students will demonstrate technical and analytic skills appropriate for success in business.

4. Our students will demonstrate an understanding of and the ability to apply knowledge of core business disciplines including accounting, finance, information systems, management, marketing, and operations management.

5. Our students will demonstrate knowledge and skills appropriate for specialization in their majors.

6. Our students will demonstrate an understanding of how research in the business disciplines contributes to knowledge and how such research is conducted.
School of Business Course objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, our students will be able to:

1. Identify and explain fundamental legal concepts from a variety of subject areas of commercial law

2. Demonstrate the ability to apply fundamental legal concepts through legal reasoning to resolve business related legal disputes

3. Identify ethical issues and understand the importance of ethical behavior in business

4. Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of law on business and the role of business in shaping the legal and regulatory environment.

In addition to these objectives, students should understand that the law is a language-based profession. Lawyers communicate with one another, judges, legislators, and other audiences through the written word, and students in BULE 402 should know by the end of the semester how to do that in clear, concise prose.

School of Business Standards of Behavior

The mission of the School of Business at George Mason University is to create and deliver high-quality educational programs and research. Students, faculty, staff, and alumni who participate in these educational programs contribute to the well-being of society. High-quality educational programs require an environment of trust and mutual respect, free expression and inquiry, and a commitment to truth, excellence, and lifelong learning. Students, program participants, faculty, staff, and alumni accept these principles when they join the School of Business community. In doing so, they agree to abide by the following standards of behavior:

- Respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others
- Honesty and integrity in dealing with all members of the community
- Accountability for personal behavior

Integrity is an essential ingredient of a successful learning community. Ethical standards of behavior help promote a safe and productive community environment, and ensure every member the opportunity to pursue excellence. The School of Business can and should be a living model of these behavioral standards. To this end, community members have a personal responsibility to integrate these standards into every aspect of their experience at the School of Business. Through our personal commitment to these Community Standards of Behavior, we can create an environment in which all can achieve their full potential. If these Standards of Behavior are violated, then students may be required to complete additional learning activities assigned by the instructor.
School of Business Anti-Racism Statement

As a member of the George Mason University community, the School of Business plays an integral role in building an educational environment that is committed to anti-racism and inclusive excellence. An anti-racist approach to higher education acknowledges the ways that individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural manifestations of racism against Black individuals and other people of color contribute to inequality and injustice in our classrooms, on our campuses, and in our communities, and it strives to provide our community members with resources to interrupt cycles of racism so as to cultivate a more equitable, inclusive, and just environment for all of our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends, regardless of racial background.

To be anti-racist means:

- To make constant, conscious decisions to interrupt racism and cultivate equity, inclusion, and justice for people of all racial backgrounds, and in particular those from Black communities and other communities of color, who are most likely to bear the direct and indirect costs of systems of white supremacy;
- To interrogate histories of white supremacy and white-dominant culture, and to examine the ways in which these histories have impacted our individual beliefs, our interpersonal relationships, our institutional and structural policies and processes, and our entire society;
- To make a commitment to being responsible for our own relationships to, and actions within, systems of white supremacy; and
- To cultivate a practice of self-awareness and self-reflection that allows us to critically evaluate our own role in upholding white supremacy and identify the ways we can interrupt cycles of racism at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels.

We believe that the work of anti-racism starts with each individual, and that in cultivating an anti-racist approach to research, scholarship, and practice, our students will build a skillset rooted in principles of equity, inclusion, and justice that they will carry with them throughout their lives.

For more information on how to continuously cultivate the practice of anti-racism, see this guide from the National Museum of African American History and Culture on how to be anti-racist: https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist

[This antiracism statement was prepared by Dr. Charles Chavis, Assistant Professor in the Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter School of Peace and Conflict Resolution]

Honor Code Statement

The Honor System and Code adopted by George Mason University will be enforced for this class: https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/. Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated in the School of Business. In your work on all written assignments, keep in mind that you may not present as your own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement. You also may not borrow the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else
without proper acknowledgement. In this course, you are expected to use APA style citations and reference lists.

Faculty are obligated, without exception, to submit any Honor Code violations or suspected violations to the Honor Committee. The sanctions under Mason’s Honor Code are available at pp. 6-7 of this handbook.

Religious Absences

If you will miss class for religious reasons, inform the instructor of the anticipated absence as soon as possible.

Additional Resources

Accessibility and Accommodations

If you need academic accommodations for special needs, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474 and inform the instructor of any special needs as soon as you have your paperwork. Note that accommodations are not retroactive. More information about ODS is available at http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc.

Counseling Services

George Mason University’s Counseling and Psychological Services can provide assistance if you find yourself overwhelmed by life, want training in academic or life skills, or just need to talk to a professional counselor. For more information, please visit https://caps.gmu.edu/, call 703-993-2380 or stop by their office in Student Union Building 1, Room 3129.

Inclement Weather and Campus Emergencies

Information regarding weather-related changes in the University’s schedule (e.g., closing or late opening) will be provided on the GMU website and via Mason Alert. Students can sign up for the Mason Alert system to provide emergency information of various sorts at https://ready.gmu.edu/masonalert/. An emergency poster in each classroom explains what to do in the event of a crisis.

COURSE CONTENT

Your professor will post assignments, readings, and other material in the “Content Modules” section of Blackboard. Due to your professor’s medical issues, the entire course will not be available initially, but he will continue to add content as quickly as possible. He will notify you by email when new information is posted.