

2011/2012



SF State ABA Approved Academic Certificate Program

# PARALEGAL STUDIES

[www.cel.sfsu.edu/paralegal/](http://www.cel.sfsu.edu/paralegal/)

**San Francisco State University** joins the list of 250 ABA approved programs offered by colleges and universities across the country.

It is the only ABA approved program in San Francisco and one of only four in the Bay Area.

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The paralegal program at SF State began in 1975 and has continued a commitment to educational excellence; having graduated more than 900 paralegals.

*Graduate Benefit  
See page 2*

"The program holds you to top standards: if you can succeed in it, you will be well prepared for paralegal work anywhere. For instance, I found the assignments to be very realistic, virtually identical to the work I do everyday as a paralegal. Particularly important, I learned through the program how to approach an assignment: the research needed, the language used for legal memos and pleadings, the organization required for all the pre-trial discovery and the work of an actual trial.

I also met wonderful people who continue to be important resources for me in my work. Professionally and financially, completing the certificate program has been extremely worthwhile."

~ **Pam Rolph, Senior Intellectual Property Paralegal**

**For further information contact:**

Program Coordinator,  
Paralegal Studies Certificate Program

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# PARALEGAL STUDIES

## ACADEMIC CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

### SF STATE ABA APPROVED PARALEGAL STUDIES ACADEMIC CERTIFICATE

San Francisco State University is pleased to announce that the American Bar Association has granted approval to the Paralegal Studies program offered by SF State Extended Learning. This is the only ABA approved paralegal studies program in San Francisco.

Recent California legislation defines who may call himself or herself a paralegal and sets forth educational criteria for paralegals. One of the criteria is graduation from a program approved by the American Bar Association. Please refer to the section on New California Legislation on Paralegals cited to the right.

#### RELATED TITLE/AREAS:

Case manager  
Claims adjuster  
Compliance investigator/officer  
Computer support specialist  
Consumer advocate/consultant  
Court administrative assistant  
Court-appointed child advocate  
Employee benefits administrator  
Guardian ad litem  
Guardianship coordinator  
Homeowners' association administrator  
Housing administrator  
Insurance adjuster  
Land-use planner  
Law librarian  
Law office manager  
Legal book editor  
Legal administrator  
Legal assistant manager  
Legislative analyst  
Loan administrator  
Marketer of legal services  
Mediator  
Military legal specialist  
Ombudsman  
Patents specialist  
Personnel administrator  
Probation officer  
Risk manager  
Securities compliance clerk  
Title checker  
Trade association lobbyist  
Trademark administrator  
Trust administrator  
Victim advocate

### Paralegal Studies Advising and Career Information Session

A special advising and career information session for prospective Paralegal students is held three times a year before the start of each semester. Program graduates who are practicing paralegals, representatives from the San Francisco Paralegal Association, and members of the program staff will provide information on the program, career opportunities and the profession. See SF State Extended Learning catalog or go to [www.cel.sfsu.edu](http://www.cel.sfsu.edu) for current dates.

### GRADUATE BENEFIT

SF State Paralegal graduates may audit a semester elective course of their choice at a 50% registration fee discount.

Registration forms must be submitted to Pat Medina for verification. Payment must be made in person at the 6th floor front desk.



### THE PROFESSION

Paralegals or legal assistants are highly skilled para-professionals who work with attorneys in all areas of civil and criminal law. The American Bar Association defines this occupation as follows: A legal assistant or paralegal is a person, qualified by education, training or work experience, who is employed or retained by a lawyer, law office, corporation, governmental agency or other entity and who performs specifically delegated substantive legal work for which a lawyer is responsible. Paralegal functions are diverse and wide-ranging, including drafting legal documents, interviewing clients, conducting legal research, and investigating and preparing cases for trial.

### EMPLOYMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS

Paralegals are employed in private law firms, public interest and legal aid organizations, corporations, banks and government agencies. Some paralegals work as independent contractors providing their services to lawyers on a contract basis. Others work independently as non-lawyer advocates representing persons before administrative agencies. In large law firms, career paths from document and case clerks to senior paralegals have been developed. Because of the growth in the need for legal training for employees in all sectors of the economy, new avenues of employment are being created on a continuous basis.

*"I just want to let you know how much appreciated the Paralegal Studies program is by not only myself, but also others not yet in the program. I work for the administrative office of the courts in the Office of the General Counsel. As a rule, they do not reimburse for tuition for their support staff. After starting here last December, I was put in several situations where I was able to use the knowledge I learned in the paralegal classes. When asked how I knew these things, I let the attorneys know I was attending classes at SF State for my paralegal certificate. I have also shown some of the other support staff my books, in particular Pat Medina's Paralegal Discovery. It has been extremely helpful as reference material."*

~ Patricia Calef, paralegal, San Francisco Superior Court Judicial Council

## CALIFORNIA LEGISLATION ON PARALEGALS

The state of California adopted legislation in 2000 that defines the titles "paralegal" and "legal assistant" and sets educational criteria and continuing education requirements for paralegals. The San Francisco State University Paralegal Studies certificate program meets the educational requirements of the law by virtue of being offered by an accredited institution with an ABA-approved program, and consisting of more than 24 semester units of paralegal coursework. We also offer a series of paralegal continuing education courses to meet the continuing education standards established by the Business and Professions Code Section 6450 et. seq.

The statute defines "paralegal/legal assistant" as "a person who contracts with or is employed by an attorney, law firm, corporation, governmental agency or other entity and who performs substantial legal work under the direction and supervision of an active member of the State Bar of California..." The statute is intended to differentiate paralegals who work under the supervision of an attorney from persons who provide services directly to the public and are required under California law to be registered as Legal Document Assistants.

Paralegals perform a wide variety of tasks, some of which are set forth in the new law. Among these are "case planning, development and management; legal research; interviewing clients; fact gathering and retrieving information; drafting and analyzing legal documents; collecting, compiling and utilizing technical information to make an independent decision and recommendation to the supervising attorney; and representing clients before a state or federal administrative agency if that representation is permitted by statute, court rule, or administrative rule or regulation."

Standards are high in the legal profession and most law firms require some college background and formal paralegal education. Large firms usually require a BA degree. Employers also require paralegals to have highly developed oral and written communication skills, plus organizational and computer skills\*.

\* For a complete description of the California legislation, see Business and Professional Code section 6450, at [www.sen.ca.gov](http://www.sen.ca.gov).

## THE PROGRAM

SF State Extended Learning offers a 30-academic-unit certificate program in paralegal studies, providing instruction in practical legal skills and substantive law. Courses are conducted at the upper-division level and are taught by attorneys and paralegals, all of whom have practical experience in the field. This program is a member of the American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE), which requires that all of its member programs be in substantial compliance with nationally recognized guidelines. It is also accredited through San Francisco State University by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the official regional accrediting body for academic institutions in the western part of the country, and approved by the American Bar Association.

### PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of the Paralegal Studies certificate program is to educate students for positions as paralegals as a means of improving the quality, accessibility, and affordability of legal services.

The program's key objectives are:

- to provide students with an overview of the legal system and law practice
- to provide students with in-depth knowledge and skills to work in civil litigation
- to prepare students to perform legal research and to draft a variety of legal documents
- to teach students the rules and laws governing the conduct of paralegals and to help them internalize high ethical values and behavior
- to help students develop strong oral and written communication skills
- to provide students with the opportunity to learn the skills needed to function in one or more areas of practice other than litigation

### LENGTH OF PROGRAM

The 30 units required to earn the certificate may be completed in as short a time as 18-24 months – 4 or 5 semesters – or students may choose to take as long as four years.

International students and other students who are required to complete this program in one year; or students who wish to complete this program in 12 months (3 semesters); are encouraged to see Pat Medina for academic counseling. The recommended course load per semester is 3 or 4 courses. Students are not permitted to register in more than 4 courses per semester.

### COST OF PROGRAM

The total cost of the program is approximately \$8,200 plus a \$50 non-refundable application fee. Most courses are \$275 per unit. Lab fees are added for courses that require computer lab sessions. Students pay for courses on a semester-by-semester basis. Each semester, fees are subject to increase as needed. Additional costs for texts and materials vary by course from approximately \$15 to \$100.

## LOCATION AND FREQUENCY OF CLASSES

Classes are offered in the daytime and evenings at the SF State Downtown Campus, 835 Market Street, 6th floor, San Francisco. Classes begin three times per year in late August, late January, and late May or early June. In fall and spring semesters, each class is scheduled for two and a half hours per night, one night per week for 15 weeks. Summer term courses are generally offered one night a week for three and a half hours per night for 11 weeks.

### ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to have a minimum of 60 semester or 90 quarter units of prior academic course credit to be admitted to the program. Students who hold a baccalaureate degree are automatically eligible for admission to the program. Students who do not have such a degree but have the required units of college work are eligible if their college work includes at least 30 semester or 45 quarter units of academic general education courses covering four basic skills: oral communication, written composition, critical thinking, and mathematics or quantitative reasoning; and have completed those courses with a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or better.

Students with at least three years of legal experience who have at least 45 semester or 68 quarter units of college work may petition for conditional admission. Official transcripts verifying units must be accompanied by an attorney declaration attesting to their legal work experience, which must have been within five years of their application to SF State Paralegal program.

### ADMISSION PROCEDURES

Students must apply for admission by the end of the first semester in which they enroll. A non-refundable application fee of \$50 must be paid when submitting the application. All students must supply official transcripts of their college work. Students with baccalaureate or academic associate degrees need to provide official transcripts from the college from which they graduated. Students without such a degree must provide college transcripts from all the colleges they attended. Students are responsible for contacting the colleges they attended and arranging for official transcripts to be sent directly to the program, or they must hand carry these records to the program offices in a sealed envelope.

Re-Admission: Certificate program students who do not register for courses for one calendar year are considered inactive and must reapply to the program by paying an additional \$50 application fee and submitting a new application.

## NON-CERTIFICATE STUDENTS

Those who already have experience in the legal field and who wish to take selected courses without applying to the program may register for courses with the permission of the individual instructor and program director.

## TRANSFER OF CREDITS

A maximum of nine upper-division, academic semester units may be transferred from another ABA-approved paralegal program; if the student received a grade of 'B' or better. Courses must have been completed within 5 years of application to the SF State Paralegal program.

## ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Paralegal courses require strong writing skills. Certificate students who do not have a bachelor's degree must pass the Junior English Proficiency Essay Test (JEPET) before completion of the Paralegal Studies program in order to satisfy the general university literacy requirement. Students who do not pass the JEPET may register for **PLS 414 Introduction to Professional Legal Writing** which counts for credit as an elective course and also satisfies the literacy requirement. At the discretion of the Program Director, students who are non-native English speakers may be required to achieve an adequate score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or to take designated courses to develop their written and oral communication skills in English. Contact the Testing Center at [www.sfsu.edu/~testing/jepet.html](http://www.sfsu.edu/~testing/jepet.html) or call (415) 338-2271, for more information.

## COMPUTER PROFICIENCY

Basic computer proficiency is essential in the legal workplace and all new students are subject to the following requirements:

- New students must verify that they have basic computer literacy, including the ability to use a common word processing program, email, and the Internet, or develop these skills before they graduate. Students without basic computer literacy must attain these skills through self-study or by taking PLS 9182: Introduction to computer Applications.
- Students who have not worked in a legal setting are required to take **Computer Applications in Law Practice, PLS 430**. All other students may take this course as an elective. Students must have basic computer literacy skills, including word-processing, email, and the Internet, before they enroll in this course.
- Students who have not worked in a legal setting but have extensive computer experience through non-legal employment, may not be required to take **PLS 430**. Those students should contact Baseemah Rahman at [Brahman@sfsu.edu](mailto:Brahman@sfsu.edu) for information.

## CREDIT TOWARD A BA DEGREE

Units earned in this program carry full upper-division academic credit. All units may be applied as general elective units toward a Bachelor of Arts degree at SF State and other CSU institutions.

## CURRICULUM

### REQUIRED COURSES

#### (Civil Litigation Emphasis)

Students are required to take five three-unit courses that develop the following paralegal skills:

- interviewing clients and others involved in legal matters
- performing legal research, including checking the validity of authority and cite-checking
- performing legal research electronically through computerized legal systems and the Internet
- gathering and analyzing legal and other documents
- drafting internal memoranda, correspondence, and legal forms
- drafting legal memoranda reflecting the results of research
- drafting a variety of litigation-related documents
- assisting in the preparation of cases for trial
- resolving ethical dilemmas by applying rules and law to determine the appropriate ethical conduct
- making effective oral presentations.

### PREREQUISITES

**PLS 300 and PLS 320**, which may be taken concurrently, must be completed with a grade of C or better before a student may take any other class in the Paralegal Certificate program.

### REQUIRED COURSES

	Fall	Spring	Summer
Introduction to Law/ Civil Procedure	•	•	•
Legal Research & Writing	•	•	•
Communication Skills & Legal Ethics	•	•	•
Pleadings & Motions	•	•	•
Investigation, Discovery & Trial Prep.	•	•	•
*Computer Applications in Law Practice	•	•	•
**Introduction to Professional Legal Writing	•	•	

(\*required for students not working in a legal setting)

(\*\*required for students who do not have a B.A.)

## ELECTIVE COURSES

Students may choose any electives to complete the 30-unit program. Elective courses offer in-depth instruction in a variety of practice areas and advanced skills in litigation and research. The range of elective options allows students to gain exposure to several different areas of law practice or to concentrate their studies in a cluster of courses that prepare them for a particular kind of employment.

The electives listed below are grouped according to the kind of practice for which these courses are most relevant. Students may concentrate in one area or take any combination of electives suited to their particular interests.

All electives are offered on a rotating basis. Some electives are offered once a year and some are offered less frequently. Electives are three units.

### 1 - Corporate and Business Practice

These electives relate to corporate and business practice areas typically handled by large, mid-sized and specialized "boutique" law firms serving the business sector and by in-house counsel of corporations.

### 2 - Advanced Litigation

These electives enhance the skills provided in the required core courses with more sophisticated and complex skills in civil litigation specialties. More than 70 percent of paralegals work in litigation, usually focusing in one or two particular areas, such as Tort or business litigation. Students interested in litigation should also take some specialized practice courses to complement their general litigation skills. Note: Those interested in large law firms should take business-oriented courses; those interested in small firm practice should take Family Law, Criminal Law, and Evidence.

### 3 - Estate Planning

Some attorneys, in both large and small law firms, specialize in the planning and handling of wills, trusts, and estates. Students interested in this area should take Wills, Trusts & Estate Planning, and Probate Procedures; also of particular value in this area are Real Estate Practice, Torts, Contracts and Elder Law.

### 4 - Recommended for all areas, particularly for those without prior legal experience:

Two courses are highly recommended regardless of the chosen area of law practice. Paralegal Internship gives students practical on-the-job work experience in a supervised setting and makes a valuable addition to a résumé. Computer Applications in Law Practice enhances the student's basic computer skills with hands-on instruction in specific legal applications and is required for students who are not already working in a legal setting.

## Electives and Their Specialty Areas

ELECTIVES	1	2	3	4
Administrative Law	•	•		
Advanced Legal Research	•	•	•	
Bankruptcy	•		•	•
Computer Applications **	•	•	•	•
Computer Applications II	•	•	•	•
Contemporary Legal Issues	•	•	•	•
Contracts	•		•	•
Corporations Law	•			
Criminal Law		•		
Elder Law	•	•	•	•
Employment Law	•	•		
Environmental Litigation	•	•	•	•
Evidence	•	•		
Family Law		•		
Paralegal Internship	•	•	•	•
Immigration Law	•	•		
Intellectual Property	•	•		
Introduction to Professional Legal Writing	•	•	•	•
Probate Procedures			•	
Real Estate Practice			•	•
Torts		•	•	•
Wills, Trusts and Estates			•	

\*\* required for students not working in law; elective for other students.

### Textbooks

Paralegal textbooks will be available for purchase ONLY from the SF State Bookstore (main campus) in the Text Book section or from their website: [www.sfsu bookstore.com](http://www.sfsu bookstore.com), go to "Textbooks," click "Downtown Campus current semester textbooks," and click "PLS." For more information, please call (415) 338-7054.

### LexisNexis Subscription Option

Students officially enrolled in the 30-unit Paralegal Studies Certificate Program have the option to purchase a LexisNexis (LN) subscription for \$80. This non-refundable subscription rate entitles the student to LN access for at school or at home use for one full year (commercial or business use is strictly prohibited). LN access terminates at the end of the one-year subscription period, or upon graduation or withdrawal from the program, whichever comes sooner. Sign-up begins during the first three weeks of fall and spring semester. Checks or money orders only will be collected by Baseemah Rahman or Pat Medina (no cash or credit cards), payable to "SFSU-CEL." No additional subscriptions will be accepted after the sign-up period ends until the following semester.

Direct ALL inquiries re: the LexisNexis subscription program to Eduardo Cerpa at [ecerpa@sfsu.edu](mailto:ecerpa@sfsu.edu) or [brahman@sfsu.edu](mailto:brahman@sfsu.edu).

### Paralegal Library - room 615

The Library is open to all prospective and current students and contains books on areas of instruction, the paralegal profession, student internship journals, legal newspapers, career resources, and professional association newsletters and magazines.

### Financial Aid

The College of Extended Learning receives no state money to support its programs; therefore, financial aid is extremely limited. Financial aid, if granted, is only available to students who are admitted to the academic certificate program, enrolled in at least six units per semester and have not yet earned a baccalaureate degree. Financial aid is only available in the fall and spring semesters. For further information, contact Milly Mohr at the financial aid office at (415) 338-2765, or visit their website at: [www.sfsu.edu/~finaid/Extendfa.html](http://www.sfsu.edu/~finaid/Extendfa.html).

### Certificate Requirements and Award

An academic certificate is awarded after successful completion of 30 units (including all required courses and elective courses). At least 21 units must be graded on an A-F basis. Required courses, **PLS 300, 305, 310, 320, and 395** must be completed with a letter grade. For information on registering for courses on a credit/no credit basis see SF State Extended Learning catalog. Students must earn a minimum grade of C in all courses and have a cumulative average of C+ to earn the certificate. All coursework must be completed within a four-year period, and financial obligations to the university must be cleared. Students who graduate with a grade point average of 3.5 or higher will have honors identification on their certificates.

### Graduation Application Deadline

An application for the certificate must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the beginning of the session in which a student intends to graduate. Applications not received by the deadline will not be processed until the following semester. Note: Those who do not have baccalaureate degrees must attach proof of passing the JEPET or PLS 414 to their graduation applications.

### Register for Courses Early

Admission to the Paralegal Studies program does not guarantee a seat in class. Registration for individual courses is on a first-come, first-served basis. Early registration is strongly advised.

### Advising and Career Information Session

A special advising and career information session for prospective paralegal students is held three times a year before the start of each semester. Program staff, graduates who are practicing paralegals, and representatives from the San Francisco Paralegal Association provide information on the program, career opportunities and the profession. See SF State Extended Learning catalog or go to [www.cel.sfsu.edu](http://www.cel.sfsu.edu) for current dates.

## REQUIRED COURSES

### PLS 0300 INTRODUCTION TO LAW/CIVIL PROCEDURE (3 UNITS)

This course provides an overview of the American system of civil litigation and the role the paralegal plays in it. You will learn the sources of the law; how to read and brief a case; the similarities and differences between the California and federal systems; trial preparation and alternative dispute resolution. The course follows a hypothetical civil dispute, based upon the laws of contracts and torts, from its inception through trial. Students will acquire basic skills immediately transferable to the workplace: how to prepare and file basic pleadings; discovery tools; provisional pretrial remedies; case management; trial preparation and the appeal process.

### PLS 0320 LEGAL RESEARCH & WRITING (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite: PLS 300 (may be taken concurrently) or equivalent experience.* In this comprehensive, basic legal research course, students are introduced to legal research materials and taught how to use the law library. Skills developed include using statutes, codes, cases, digests, citations, encyclopedias, legal periodicals and government documents; finding, reading and synthesizing cases and statutes; and preparing certain kinds of legal memoranda. Assignments emphasizing problem analysis, legal writing and legal research tools normally require at least six to eight hours per week in a law library. Demonstration and hands-on use of LEXIS/NEXIS on-line database, and the Internet are included.

### PLS 0310 COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND LEGAL ETHICS (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite: PLS 300 and 320 or equivalent experience.* This course is designed to provide students with a working knowledge of the principles and rules of legal ethics and professional responsibility, with particular emphasis on their application to legal assistants, and to develop students' abilities to communicate effectively in the legal environment. Ethics material includes regulation of lawyers and legal assistants, unauthorized practice of law, confidentiality and attorney-client privilege, conflicts of interest, advertising and solicitation, competence and professionalism. Students' communication skills are enhanced through weekly assignments, including case briefs, mock interviews, and formal presentations.

### PLS 0395 PLEADINGS & MOTIONS (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite: PLS 300 and 320 or equivalent experience.* This course covers the theoretical and practical legal skills necessary to draft pleadings and motions in civil cases. Thorough analysis of the courts, jurisdiction and venue and parties to a suit as they relate to pleadings are included. Students draft complaints, motions, answers, and other pertinent documents used in all aspects of a lawsuit.

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**PLS 0305 INVESTIGATION, DISCOVERY, & TRIAL PREPARATION (3 UNITS)**

*Prerequisite: PLS 300, 320, 395, or equivalent experience.* This course concentrates on investigation, discovery, and trial preparation in civil litigation. Content includes state and federal discovery procedures and statutes; methods of gathering factual data; preparation and organization of evidence for trial; analysis and digesting of discovery motions and documents; and the role of the paralegal at trial. Emphasis is on tort litigation.

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**PLS 0430 COMPUTER APPLICATIONS IN LAW PRACTICE I (3 UNITS)**

*Prerequisite: basic computer skills, MS Office software, Internet access, and an Internet-based email account (e.g. Yahoo!, Hotmail, Gmail, etc.).*

*Note: This course may be taken concurrently with PLS 300 and 320.* This class is designed to provide students with a working knowledge of Microsoft™ Office as it is used in law practice, and hands-on experience with essential litigation and practice management software applications. In addition to MS Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Access, students will learn how to: use Legal Solutions Plus to construct case files that utilize California Judicial Counsel forms; assemble documents and create templates with HotDocs; use CaseMap to organize and explore the parties, documents and issues of a case; and analyze case facts using TimeMap. Students will also learn the strategies of effective Internet-based legal research and become familiar with LexisNexis (non-subscribers will be provided with limited access). Class size limited to 20 students.

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**ELECTIVES**

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**PLS 0340 ADMINISTRATIVE LAW (3 UNITS)**

*Prerequisite: PLS 300 and 320 or equivalent experience.* Administrative law is the set of rules which control and limit the power and practices of administrative agencies. This course is designed to develop paralegal skills for effective dealing with federal, state, and local agencies, particularly those which employ or do business with paralegals. Topics include the structure and function of agencies, government information and citizen privacy, regulation making, adjudication and judicial review. Emphasis is on individual research projects and guest speaker format, as well as lectures.

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**PLS 0420 ADVANCED LEGAL RESEARCH AND WRITING (3 UNITS)**

*Prerequisite: PLS 300 and 320.* This is an in-depth course for developing legal writing and research skills. Emphasis is on detailed research, including court records, agency documents and on-line services. A broad range of substantive topics is covered, and legal writing assignments involving both memoranda of law and legal instruments are included.

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**PLS 0350 BANKRUPTCY: DEBTOR'S RIGHTS & CREDITOR'S REMEDIES (3 UNITS)**

*Prerequisite: PLS 320.* This course covers the general nature of the bankruptcy process under federal bankruptcy code (Title 1), with emphasis on liquidation (Chapter 7), reorganization (Chapter 11), and debt adjustment (Chapter 13). Students are taught case administration, preparation, and filing of papers, client data gathering, and an overview of pleadings involved in bankruptcy. Topics include automatic stay, highlights of bankruptcy amendments, and the Federal Judgeship Act.

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**PLS 0431 COMPUTER APPLICATIONS IN LAW PRACTICE II (3 UNITS)**

*Prerequisite: PLS 300, 320, 430, 395 and 305, MS Office software, Internet access, and an Internet-based email account (e.g. Yahoo!, Hotmail, gmail, etc.).* This class is a continuation of PLS 430, covering intermediate and advanced usage of specialized legal software including litigation support software (Summation and Concordance) and trial presentation software (PowerPoint, Trial Director and Sanction). This course will additionally concentrate on a practical approach to the handling of electronic evidence in discovery at the state and federal level. Content includes methods of collecting electronic data, preservation of electronic data, preparation of electronic data for review and methods of production of electronic data. Emphasis on Electronic Evidence Management in Litigation and compliance with new civil judicial procedure and rules concerning electronic evidence. Class size limited to 20.

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**PLS 0386 CONTEMPORARY LEGAL ISSUES: CIVIL RIGHTS LITIGATION & HABEAS CORPUS (3 UNITS)**

*Prerequisite: PLS 300 and 320.* This course is primarily for paralegal students interested in learning about and understanding the basics of constitutional law. The focus will primarily concern U.S. Supreme Court cases, however, where the California Constitution provides a different perspective, it will be addressed as well.

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**PLS 0426 CONTRACTS (3 UNITS)**

*Prerequisite: PLS 300 and 320.* This course is designed to introduce students to contract law. Substantively the course will examine one of the three major areas of civil litigation. Contracts will be examined from formation, through defenses and discharge to performances and remedies. Students will read and analyze case authority, create pleadings, engage in provisional pretrial remedies and solve drafting problems.

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**PLS 0390 CORPORATIONS LAW (3 UNITS)**

*Prerequisite: PLS 300 and 320 or equivalent experience.* This course familiarizes the student with the functions of a paralegal in corporate law, including preparation of initial and amended articles of incorporation, drafts of stock certificates, stock ledgers and books, corporate minutes and resolution. Topics include the principal forms of business enterprise and their major concerns, the role of a paralegal in employment agreements, stock options, buy-sell agreements, registration materials for regulatory agencies, acquisition and merger transactions, and closings.

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**PLS 0370 CRIMINAL LAW (3 UNITS)**

*Prerequisite: PLS 300 and 320 or equivalent.* This course focuses on legal procedures and practice in criminal law, including selected crimes and their element, the function of the grand jury and preliminary hearing, the law of search and seizure and other pretrial motions. Included are drafting of selected motions, investigation and interviewing technique, methods of jury selection, preparation of case for trial, plea bargaining, death penalty law, and procedure, diminished capacity and insanity, sentencing and other post-trial procedures.

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**PLS 0360 ELDER LAW (3 UNITS)**

*Prerequisite: PLS 300 and 320.* This course covers the legal issues involved in working with the elderly, including estate planning, elder abuse, conservatorships, long-term care, and ethics, including:

- estate planning: creating critical legal documents including wills and trusts, durable powers of attorney and advance health care directives
- timing, competency, and undue influence
- elder abuse and profiles of financial and physical abuse
- at-home care and care managers; independent living and assisted living
- skilled nursing facilities, Medical eligibility, share of cost and estate recovery; conservatorships and accountability to the court
- ethical considerations in elder law, including relationships with clients, fees, and conflicts of interest

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**PLS 0325 EMPLOYMENT LAW (3 UNITS)**

*Prerequisite: PLS 300 and 320 or equivalent experience.* This course examines the legal basis and litigation strategy of employment cases, including discrimination and wrongful termination. The course will cover both federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination based on race, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, and age. Topics covered will also include sexual harassment, affirmative action, defamation, drug testing, and privacy rights in the workplace.

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### PLS 0475 EVIDENCE FOR PARALEGALS (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite:* **PLS 300, 320, and 395** or consent of instructor. This course concentrates on the principles of evidence as practiced in criminal and civil courts and alternative dispute resolution including judicial arbitration. Content includes the rules and standards that determine the admissibility and content of evidence. This course will assist paralegals to become adept in properly collecting, preserving, presenting and coordinating evidence at the pretrial and trial levels. Students specializing in litigation, as well as working paralegals, will learn how to simplify evidentiary issues and assist attorneys in resolving evidentiary problems in advance of trial.

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### PLS 0330 FAMILY LAW (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite:* **PLS 300 and 320** or equivalent experience. This course is a practice-oriented overview of family law, including child custody problems, ethical issues, personal and property rights and responsibilities, and dissolution of the family unit. It is designed to develop paralegal skills for conducting client interviews and drafting routine pleadings, developing sensitivity to clients and exploring the legal system's capacities and limitations.

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### PLS 0345 IMMIGRATION LAW (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite:* **PLS 300 and 320** or equivalent experience. This course is a practice-oriented overview of immigration law, with an emphasis on immigration procedures in the following areas: family and employment visas, political asylum, labor certification, and non-immigrant visas. Students gain an understanding of immigration theory and practice and develop practical skills in preparation of forms and supporting documentation, client interviews and case preparation.

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### PLS 0435 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite:* **PLS 320**. This course is an introductory survey of intellectual property law and covers topics such as copyrights, trademarks, and patents. Emphasis is on the understanding of fundamental legal concepts as they are applied in law practice. The course addresses the role of paralegals in matters such as: (1) the registration of copyrights and trademarks; (2) patent prosecution; (3) infringement disputes; and (4) enforcement and licensing of intellectual property matters. Particular attention is paid to patents and related intellectual property in the context of technological commerce.

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### PLS 0414 INTRODUCTION TO PROFESSIONAL LEGAL WRITING (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite:* **English 214** or equivalent. This course may be taken concurrently with **PLS 300** and **PLS 320**. It is required for all certificate students who do not have a B.A. degree; and is highly recommended as a elective for students interested in an intensive writing course designed to improve their professional written communication skills. Effective written communication is important in every professional interaction. This writing course moves well beyond undergraduate composition courses to focus on understanding grammar and style.

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### PLS 0380 PARALEGAL INTERNSHIP (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite:* **PLS 300 and 320** plus two additional courses depending on placement. Open only to admitted certificate program students. An Internship bridges the gap between the classroom and the legal work world. Students are placed in a legal setting of their choice for two days per week for 15 weeks (120 hours.) Under special circumstances one day of week may be considered. Students are also required to attend monthly Saturday morning seminars on ethics, interpersonal communications in the law office, resume writing, office politics, time management, and stress prevention. Placements are available with large and small law firms, corporations, and legal service and government agencies. Students without legal experience are strongly encouraged to take this course, which may be taken twice for a total of six units. This course is graded on a credit/no credit basis. Special note to students with full-time job commitments: The Bar Association of San Francisco Volunteer Legal Services program offers students training in its pro bono clinics, usually held on evenings and Saturdays.

*NOTE:* Counseling for students interested in internships on an individual basis, students should contact Pat Medina at [patsmedina@aol.com](mailto:patsmedina@aol.com).

*NOTE:* Students may ONLY register with a signature from Pat Medina.

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### PLS 0375 PROBATE PROCEDURES (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite:* **PLS 300 and 320**. This course covers practice and procedure in the administration of a decedent's estate in California, including all step involved in a formal probate procedure, from probating a will through final distribution. Students learn terminology, asset collection and valuation, and court procedures (including guardianships and conservatorships), and are introduced to federal estate taxation.

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### PLS 0410 REAL ESTATE PRACTICE (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite:* **PLS 300 and 320**. This course focuses on understanding the documents, law, and institutions involved in all types of real estate transactions. The course provides an overview of the real estate transaction area and an introduction to the purchase and sale of single-family homes, commercial properties, and construction transactions. Basic real estate principles are included. Materials used consist of the test, hypothetical problems, and selected readings from the Civil Code and class handouts.

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### PLS 0415 ENVIRONMENTAL LITIGATION (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite:* **PLS 300, 320, 395 and 305**. This course covers major environmental laws as well as federal and California environmental programs and agencies that generate litigation and require compliance. Emphasis is on the role of the paralegal in compliance counseling and in the preparation of an environmental case for trial. This course also includes analysis of several representative cases.

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### PLS 0425 TORTS (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite:* **PLS 300 and 320**. Designed to supplement the procedural knowledge of the paralegal, this course addresses selected topics of the substantive law of torts, contracts, and remedies. The subject matter has been chosen to familiarize paralegals with concepts frequently utilized in litigation and is aimed at raising the level of paralegal sophistication in understanding litigable issues.

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### PLS 0355 WILLS, TRUSTS, & ESTATE PLANNING (3 UNITS)

*Prerequisite:* **PLS 300 and 320** or equivalent experience. This course covers the role of the paralegal in estate planning practice emphasizing those aspects most related to paralegal functions. Topics covered include control and disposition of property during life and at death and intestate succession. Federal gift and estate taxes are also explored. Students draft a will and a trust, and prepare a health care power of attorney, and a federal gift tax return.

## PARALEGAL CONTINUING EDUCATION

California Business and Professions Code Section 6450 sets out statutory requirements for continuing legal education for paralegals.

The SF State Paralegal Studies program offers several courses each semester designed to meet this requirement.

Go to [www.cel.sfsu.edu](http://www.cel.sfsu.edu) for information on upcoming courses or call (415) 817-4223 for information for the current semester.

**SF State Extended Learning is an approved MCLE, Provider Number 5079.**



2011/2012

# PARALEGAL STUDIES

SF State ABA Approved Paralegal Studies Academic Certificate

## Administration

Pat Medina, Program Director, Placement and Internship Coordinator

Baseemah Rahman, Program Coordinator

Ruth Astle, J.D., Attorney, California Administrative law judge

Vince Avellino, J.D., Contract Attorney

Marnie Carter, Senior Paralegal, Gilead Sciences, Inc.

Maryann Dressner, J.D., Attorney in private practice

Lisa Fabian, Certified Software Trainer, Keesal, Young & Logan

David Goldstein, J.D., Attorney in private practice

John Hanft, J.D., Attorney, Director, Witkin Legal Institute, West Group, author

Charles Jenkins, Attorney in private practice

William Jenkins, Deputy Attorney General

Mali Kigasari, Federal investigator

Pat Medina, Retired Senior Litigation Paralegal, Author, Program Director

Gail Quan, J.D., Attorney in private practice, Golden Gate Law School Faculty

Joe Tobener, Attorney in private practice

Nancy Van Tassel, J.D., Claims Counsel, Fidelity National Financial

Pamela Wolpa, Senior Litigation Paralegal, Littler Mendelson, P.C.

Steven Weisberg, J.D., Marin County small claims advisor and consultant

Mitzi Wortman, RNC, CCM, LNC, Legal Nurse Services

Louis Wu, J.D., Patent Attorney in private practice

Mark Yates, J.D., Attorney in private practice

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## For further information contact:

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