RIGA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LAW

Course Outline

Course number	**RBC225**					
Course title	Advanced Research Methods					
Credit points	3 ECTS (2 CP)					
Total hours	30					
Lecture hours	16					
Seminar and other hours	14					
Course level	Bachelor					
Prerequisites	RBA127 – Research Methods					
Category	**Mandatory**	**X**	Restricted elective		Free elective	

COURSE RESPONSIBLE

Name	***Academic degree***	***Academic position***
Gábor Palásti	Ph.D., LL.M., dr.jur.	Visiting associate professor

COURSE TEACHERS

Name	***Academic degree***	***Academic position***
Gábor Palásti	Ph.D., LL.M., dr.jur.	Visiting associate professor
Inese Druviete	Ph.D., LL.M.	Docent
Christy Kollmar	JD, LL.M., MBA, MGM	Visiting lecturer

COURSE ABSTRACT

This methodology course starts by examining the differences between texts in the different layers of the law (normative texts, legislative history and related official communicatios, judicial and administrative decisions, jurisprudence) as sources of legal research and legal writing. The different factors through which examination is done include, inter alia, their objectives and functions for suitability for legal research, and textual and stylistical differences. Various exercises are offered for the reading, interpretation and analysis of different types of legal texts and the reverse engineering of information contained therein, etc.

The course proceeds to examine the differences between the roles and expectations towards legal research and writing in the different legal profession.

The third and most extensive component of the course is to look at legal research and writing for thesis (research paper) purposes in law. From ther formulation of the research question and thesis topic through outlining, spotting and analysing the available sources, information and time management for thesis writing purposes, writing methodology, structuring and proportionality, many separate elements of the research and writing process are analysed through lectures and seminars, until the discussion of preparation for the oral defense.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The direct objective of the course is to prepare students for the methodology of doing their own legal research for writing their paper (thesis / research paper) during their studies. All major necessary methodological aspects of research and writing are covered.
As an indirect outcome of the course, students will be familiarized with the differences between legal texts originating in different layers of the law and will be able to interpret, analyze and utilize them for legal research purposes. It is also expected that the students will be equipped with the necessary skills to write basic legal texts in most legal environments, from law office memoranda by law clerks or as draftsman in public administration or in other legal professions.

GRADING CRITERIA

Criteria	Weighting
In-class exercises (written and oral mini-tests)	50 %
Thesis outline	50%

COURSE PLAN – MAIN SUBJECTS

No.	*Main subjects*	*Planned hours*
1	Examination of legal texts in the different layers of the law for legal research and writing purposes	10
2	Legal research and legal writing for different legal professions	3
3	The process and elements of research and writing for academic purposes in law	17

COURSE PLAN – SESSIONS

Session	*Session subjects and readings*	*Lecture/seminar*
1	The different layers of law: normative texts, legislative history and related official communicatios, judicial and administrative decisions, jurisprudence. Differences in their creation, objectives and functioning. Textual and stylistical differences.	Lecture 1 Gábor Palásti
2	The use of the different layers of law as source material for legal research. Expectations and suitability as sources of legal research. The role and use of extra-legal sources about law: press, statistical data, statements about law in other social sciences, social practices, the human component.	Lecture 2 Gábor Palásti
3	Reading seminar: understanding and reading different legal texts. Reverse engineering of meaning and intent. Understanding frequenty used grammatical and structural patterns in normative texts.	Seminar 1 Gábor Palásti
4	Reading seminar: interpretation and analysis of legal texts and making research conclusions. Indication of conclusions rather than making unjustified statements. Reverse engineering of information versus the wishful thinking of the researcher.	Seminar 2 Gábor Palásti
5	The major characteristics of legal research and legal writing for different legal professions. The scope of regular legal research and analysis in different legal professions.	Lecture 3 Gábor Palásti
6	Lessons from past thesis topic and research question cases at RGSL. Analysis and discussion of choices of past thesis and reseach paper topic: positive and negative examples. Choice of title, research planning, time management and	Seminar 3 Gábor Palásti

Session	Session subjects and readings	Lecture/seminar
	preliminary draft exercises.	
7	The characteristics of legal research and writing for academic purposes: thesis, research paper. The choice and formulation of topic and research question. Factors to consider for a good choice: objective of the paper, competence of the author, availability of research material, prospects of originality, length requirements, likelihood of success, etc.	Lecture 4 Gábor Palásti
8	Major rules of citation. Reverse engineering of legal information from citation information. Major abbreviations used in legal writing. Frequent mistakes in grammar, word choice and style in RGSL BA theses.	Seminar 4 Gábor Palásti
9	Planning the extent of research necessary for the research question. Mapping possible sources. Lack of sources situations versus abundance of sources and their solution. Thesis / paper title planning and matching the title with content. Preliminary draft. Time management for thesis writing, submission and preparation for defense. The role of the supervisor and the ideal extent of consultations.	Lecture 5 Gábor Palásti
10	Proof-reading and corrections of the final text. Preparation for the oral defense.	Seminar 5 Gábor Palásti
11	Spotting, finding, analysing and recording the legal sources. Taking notes. Preventing “I’m lost in my many notes and papers” situations. Adjustment of expectations of outcome. Keeping or losing focus. The writing process. Forming structure and structural units. Where to start writing? The role of the introduction. The structuring of the main part of the text. Summary versus conclusions. The proportionality requirement.	Lecture 6 Gábor Palásti
12	Descriptive and analytical writing. The novelty requirement. Opinion forming and de lege ferenda suggestions by a law student. The role and use of footnotes. Front page, table of contents, bibliography, acknowledgments.	Lecture 7 Gábor Palásti
13	The main requirements towards thesis outlines. The methodology of the preparation of thesis outlines.	Lecture 8 Inese Druviete
14	Thesis outline exercises 1	Seminar 6 Inese Druviete Christy Kollmar
15	Thesis outline exercises 2	Seminar 7 Inese Druviete Christy Kollmar

COURSE LITERATURE

No.	Author, title, publisher
1	Material uploaded onto the Intranet electronic course folder. Material is updated during the course.