

Preparation/Homework (for student & teacher)

Teacher:

1. Re-examine legalese issues and common complications when presenting legal language to a lay audience. Prepare an activity/slide where students translate common legal jargon into understandable text. Stack's "Latin as Gatekeeping: 100 Common Latin Legal Phrases That Obscure Meaning..." is helpful for this exercise.
2. Read Chapman's "Apt Phrasing in Legal Writing," and Trafton's "MIT Study Explains Why Laws Are Written in an Incomprehensible Style" for more background.
3. Review Overview Calendar for Unit 2. Make a slide on the genres of legal writing for a lay audience that will be covered in Unit 2: ranging from news coverage to police reports/tickets
4. For Class 2: read and review coverage on Kirk assassination and gun violence assigned to students below. Prepare to discuss the range of political spectrums covered through this coverage: the Daily Wire is a decidedly conservative media outlet; the piece by Dan Pfeiffer is from a decidedly liberal point of view (Pfeiffer is a former speechwriter for Barack Obama and hosts a podcast entitled, *Pod Saves America* that regularly covers the liberal point of view on current political and legal issues. Prepare a slide on implicit and confirmation bias (for discussion to accompany news coverage of Kirk, etc.). Prepare a slide on the ABA Model Rule of Professional Conduct that governs lawyers re: Bias. "Eliminating Implicit Bias Among Lawyers, Part 1." Review readings in student section covering bias.

Student:

1. **Case Summary:** consider the case you covered for Major Assignment #2; now transition based on a selected new audience that could potentially be impacted by your case (this is everyone in America if your case is still binding law). This can be a family member or a roommate but should be someone **without** specific training in law (for a particular challenge choose someone younger than you - late elementary or middle school age is ideal). Next, write a summary based on your work with the case so far in mind but describing it specifically to your lay audience member. Then record a voice memo on your phone of your audience member vocally summarizing the case back to you. What did the case cover? Why was it important? Who decided it? When was it decided? Write an honest assessment of how well you did in your summary. Were you effective? What did you focus on? Should you have changed your focus in any way? What would you do to educate a lay audience about a legal case in the future that you did not do here? Bring notes to class and be prepared to share.
2. **Review Political and News Coverage re:** Charlie Kirk Assassination (breaking news coverage of political violence from Sept 2025: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/live-blog/live-updates-shooting-charlie-kirk-event-utah-rcna230437>, liberal perspective: Dan Pfeiffer's "Donald Trump Pours Gas on a Dangerous Fire" conservative perspective: Michael Knowles', "We Aren't Getting the Full Story About Charlie Kirk's Assassination.") potential impacts on free speech, and Colorado's history with gun violence (<https://www.cnn.com/2025/09/11/us/colorado-gun-violence-shootings>). As you read consider: what impact does the media's coverage of Kirk's death, gun violence, and free speech have on lay audiences? What about a Colorado audience made of college students? How does the range of political coverage impact the newsworthiness or perceived accuracy of the "news" contained with them? How can you prevent bias from impacting your own writing in the future? Take notes and bring to class.
3. Read "What is Implicit Bias" from the ABA rules governing attorneys related to bias.

Lesson Objectives

1. Students begin to develop strategies to simplify communication regarding complex legal concepts in writing.
2. Students discuss the expectations and assumptions of lay audiences when it comes to legal issues and the increased responsibilities of legal writers who serve these audiences. Students practice in person through written summary.
3. Students explore impact of bias in news coverage particularly re: emotionally upsetting topics like gun violence.
4. Students learn of the wide variety of genres of legal writing for lay audiences.

Journal (beginning of class) &/or Discussion Prompt (prior to class)

1. You have covered legal scholarship and writing from an academic perspective, how do you think your tone and delivery of written material will change as we move into communicating legal principles to a lay/general audience? What will you be careful to do? What will you not do? What will you do to ensure your message makes sense to your audience? Why is it so important to take particular care when delivering legal commentary to a general audience? How well does current media coverage get this right? Wrong? Why?
2. You read a wide variety of coverage on the Kirk assassination, upon review, how does the range of political coverage impact the newsworthiness or perceived accuracy of the “news” contained within them? How can you prevent bias from impacting your own writing in the future? What responsibilities do you have to a lay audience?

Activity in Class/Discussion

1. **Presentation and Class Discussion:** attempt translation of legalese language from sources listed above and slides of certain phrases, then reexamine issues that impact a lay audience’s understanding of legal language. Brainstorm with class about things to pay attention to and responsibilities they have regarding legal communication for a lay audience.
2. **Overview** of calendar for Unit 2 and presentation of variety of genres of legal writings for lay audiences.
3. **Small Group Discussion Sessions and then Class Discussions re: Case summaries and Bias prevention strategies:** what did students learn from the case summaries delivered from a lay audience? What could they have done better? Strategies for improvement should be listed and then shared with the class to create a master list. **Display** ABA rule described above, let students brainstorm potential strategies for checking one’s bias. How are we supposed to check ourselves for bias if they are implicit or unintentional?

Connection to Course Objectives

1. Students refine rhetorical knowledge through an exploration of additional legal discourse communities.
2. Students extend experience in writing through summary and revision of summary strategies re: legal concepts.
3. Students extend application of genre, syntax, and grammatical expectations from academic to lay audiences.
4. Students expand creative thinking skills through active brainstorming of strategies to prevent bias.

Reflections (draft notes below)

--