

Sample AI-Augmented Legal Research Course Blueprint

Upper-Level Law School Course Model

This sample course blueprint is designed for an upper-level law school course on AI-augmented legal research. It is intended as an adaptable starting point for legal research instructors, law librarians, and legal writing faculty who want to design a course that helps students use AI tools critically, ethically, and professionally.

The course assumes that students have already completed foundational legal research instruction. Its purpose is not to replace traditional research training, but to help students understand how AI tools fit into legal research workflows, where those tools are useful, where they fail, and how lawyers remain responsible for final work product.

This model is organized around eight substantive class meetings and may be adapted to fit a short course, half-semester course, or longer upper-level offering. The course may be graded or offered pass/fail depending on institutional requirements.

Course Description

This course introduces students to the rapidly evolving landscape of AI-augmented legal research and the research workflows emerging in legal practice. Students will gain hands-on experience using AI tools while continuing to refine traditional legal research skills.

The course emphasizes accuracy, verification, professional judgment, source evaluation, confidentiality, and the ethical implications of integrating AI into legal work. Students will practice evaluating AI-generated legal analysis, identifying hallucinations and unsupported assertions, comparing AI-assisted research with traditional research methods, and documenting responsible research workflows.

Students will complete practical exercises throughout the course that ask them to use, evaluate, verify, and critique AI-assisted research outputs. The course should culminate in a final assignment, reflection, presentation, or research portfolio that requires students to explain not only what they found, but how they found it, what they verified, and where they exercised professional judgment.

Sample Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Conduct legal research using both traditional research platforms and AI-augmented tools, selecting appropriate methods based on the research question, jurisdiction, client context, and professional constraints.
- Critically evaluate AI-generated legal analysis for accuracy, completeness, reasoning quality, authority, and source support.

- Identify hallucinations, unsupported assertions, misquoted authority, incomplete analysis, and other reliability problems in AI-generated legal research outputs.
- Apply ethical, professional responsibility, confidentiality, and privacy principles to the use of AI in legal research and legal practice.
- Design, document, and justify a responsible research workflow that integrates AI tools with traditional verification methods and professional judgment.
- Communicate research findings in professional written and oral formats, including simulated partner updates, client communications, internal memoranda, workflow reflections, and short research presentations.

Suggested Course Structure

This sample structure assumes one class meeting per week. Instructors may expand the course by adding additional tool comparisons, jurisdiction-specific research problems, student presentations, guest speakers, or a more substantial final project.

We ek	Topic	Sample Class Focus
1	Introduction to Legal Research and AI	Course overview; baseline discussion of legal research fundamentals; introduction to AI-augmented workflows; discussion of AI as a tool to be evaluated rather than accepted uncritically.
2	AI, Ethics, and Professional Responsibility	Confidentiality, privilege, competence, supervision, candor, bias, and data security; when AI use is appropriate; how lawyers should disclose, verify, and document AI-assisted work.
3	Verification, Hallucinations, and Lawyer Accountability	Common AI failures in legal research; fabricated cases, inaccurate quotations, overstated holdings, missing authority, and false confidence; development of systematic verification habits early in the course.
4	Case Law Research	Comparison of traditional case law research and AI-assisted case law research; prompting for legal issues; evaluating case relevance, procedural posture, jurisdiction, authority, and treatment.
5	Statutory, Regulatory, and Other Primary Law Research	Use of AI tools for statutes, regulations, administrative materials, and other non-case primary law; emphasis on effective dates, version control, exceptions, definitions, and source provenance.
6	Secondary Sources and Research Strategy	Role of treatises, practice guides, legal encyclopedias, law review articles, and other secondary sources; using AI to identify concepts, generate research paths, and test understanding without substituting AI output for authority.
7	Drafting with AI	Use of AI tools to generate and revise research memos, client communications, demand letters, and other legal work product; focus on tone, audience, accuracy, editing, and

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		lawyer accountability.
8	AI in Practice and Firm Workflows	AI adoption in legal organizations; tool evaluation; privacy and data governance; billing judgment; supervision; internal policies; risks and benefits of adopting AI tools in practice.

Sample Exercises and Assessment Approach

This blueprint is designed to pair with the separate exercise materials available on this website. Instructors may select, modify, or sequence those exercises based on course length, student experience, available tools, and institutional learning goals.

Exercises should give students repeated opportunities to practice the core skills of AI-augmented legal research: deciding whether AI is appropriate for a task, protecting confidential information, prompting effectively, comparing AI-assisted research with traditional research, verifying sources, identifying hallucinations, revising AI-generated drafts, and documenting professional judgment.

Possible assessment categories include:

- **Practical Exercises:** Short assignments or in-class labs that require students to use, evaluate, verify, or critique AI-assisted legal research outputs.
- **Participation and Professional Engagement:** Attendance, preparation, in-class collaboration, discussion, peer feedback, and engagement with ethical and professional responsibility questions.
- **Final Research, Reflection, or Workflow Assignment:** A culminating assignment that asks students to synthesize what they have learned by documenting a research process, comparing traditional and AI-assisted methods, verifying outputs, and explaining how they exercised professional judgment.

The course can be graded or offered pass/fail depending on institutional context. Assessment weight should be adjusted to comply with local academic requirements. In a pass/fail version, instructors may define satisfactory completion by requiring students to complete all major exercises, participate meaningfully in class, and submit a final research, reflection, or workflow assignment. In a graded version, instructors may assign point values or percentages to practical exercises, participation, and a final project or portfolio.

Sample AI Use Policy

Generative AI tools are an integral part of this course and may be used when permitted by assignment instructions. Students remain responsible for all submitted work, including any work created, edited, summarized, or influenced by AI tools.

Students must use AI tools consistently with the duties of confidentiality, competence, candor, supervision, and professional judgment. Unless an assignment expressly authorizes use of sensitive or client-specific information in a secure environment, students should not enter confidential, privileged, identifying, or sensitive information into public AI tools.

When AI tools are used, students may be required to disclose the tool used, describe the purpose of the use, preserve relevant prompts or outputs, verify any legal authority or factual assertion, and explain how they exercised independent judgment before relying on or revising the AI-generated material.

AI output should never be treated as legal authority. Students must independently verify cases, statutes, regulations, quotations, procedural histories, and legal propositions using reliable legal research sources.

Instructors should also consider disclosing to students when and how they used AI in designing the course, preparing examples, drafting hypotheticals, generating initial materials, or refining assignments. This kind of transparency helps create an open classroom dialogue about AI use and mirrors the conversations students will need to have in practice with supervising attorneys.

Sample Verification Expectations

Students should be expected to verify:

- Existence of cited cases, statutes, regulations, and secondary sources.
- Accuracy of quotations and parentheticals.
- Jurisdiction, court level, procedural posture, and precedential value.
- Whether authority remains good law.
- Whether the AI tool omitted contrary authority or important limitations.
- Whether statutory or regulatory text is current and complete.
- Whether the output accurately distinguishes binding authority from persuasive or background sources.
- Whether the final recommendation reflects legal judgment rather than simply reproducing AI-generated analysis.

Adaptation Notes

This blueprint is intentionally tool-neutral. Instructors may adapt it using general-purpose AI tools, legal research platforms with AI features, institutionally licensed tools, or hypothetical outputs prepared by the instructor.

Instructors may also adapt the course for different institutional needs by:

- Expanding the course into a full semester.
- Compressing selected exercises into a short course or intensive module.
- Replacing live AI use with instructor-provided outputs when student access is limited.
- Using jurisdiction-specific research problems.
- Pairing the course with legal writing, clinics, externships, advanced legal research, or professional responsibility.
- Adjusting assessment weight to match graded, pass/fail, seminar, simulation, or skills-course requirements.

The central design principle is that students should not learn AI tools as shortcuts around legal research. They should learn to use AI as part of a documented, verified, professionally responsible research workflow.