

Syllabus
“Legal Writing for Law Clerks”
Professor Robert Luther III
Summer 2025 (Tuesday Section)
4:00 pm–5:50 pm on ZOOM

Course Description and Learning Outcomes: Students enrolled in this course will learn to think like a judicial law clerk. Students will accomplish this goal by taking a critical look at pleadings, briefs, and judicial opinions filed within the last few years through the eyes of a neutral but engaged observer whose responsibility is to assist a Judge. Students will also be required to draft a bench memo, deliver an oral presentation on that bench memo, and draft a final judicial opinion from their bench memo. Specifically, after the second class, students will be provided with briefing on both sides of an undecided case pending in the U.S. Court of Appeals. By **June 15, 2025**, students must turn in a bench memo for that case. From **June 16, 2025**, in lieu of group class, students will individually discuss their bench memo with me in 30 minute blocks as if they are conferencing with their Judge prior to the oral argument. Students will then watch/listen to that oral argument in real time when it is argued. A final judicial opinion drawn from the bench memo is due by **July 4, 2025**.

Grading: This course will be letter graded (i.e., on an A+* to F scale). Students will have the opportunity to earn up to 100 points and grades will be determined by the scores earned on the following assignments: bench memo (25 points); oral presentation of bench memo (20 points); final judicial opinion (45 points); and class participation (10 points).

Contact Info: Students may contact me at rluther@gmu.edu.

Date	Reading, Written, or Oral Assignment Due for Class this Day	In Class Lecture, Discussion, or Exercise
Class 1: May 20, 2025	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Lat, <i>How Should a Judge Be: In Defense of the Judge as CEO</i>, 69 Vand. L. Rev. En Banc 151 (2016) • Adam Liptak, <i>An Exit Interview With Richard Posner, Judicial Provocateur</i>, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Sept. 11, 2017). 	Lecture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions, overview of the role of the law clerk, discuss introductory readings • Distribute briefs for bench memo assignment and bench memo template

<p>Class 2: May 27, 2025</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reserve Hotels PTY Ltd. v. Mavrakis</i>, 790 F.3d 738 (7th Cir. 2015) 	<p>Lecture/Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to draft a clerkship cover letter/edit mock cover letter templates • How to draft clearly written opinions and discussion of <i>Reserve Hotels</i> • Discussion of bench memo basics <p>Take-Home Exercise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft clerkship cover letter
<p>Class 3: June 3, 2025</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skim Complaint in <i>Tobey v. Napolitano</i> (available at: https://docs.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/virginia/vaedce/3:2011cv00154/263761/1) • <i>Tobey v. Jones</i> (4th Cir. 2013) (panel and dissent) (available at: http://www.ca4.uscourts.gov/Opinions/Published/112230.P.pdf) • The Honorable Patrick J. Bumatay, <i>The Value of Dissent</i>, 47 HARVARD JOURNAL OF LAW & PUBLIC POLICY 75 (2024) <p>Listen to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral Argument in <i>Tobey</i> case (available at: http://www.ca4.uscourts.gov/OAarchive/mp3/11-2230-20121024.mp3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the <i>Tobey</i> case and filed Complaint <p>• Bench memo due via email by June 15, 2025</p>
<p>Class 4: Week of June 9, 2025</p>	<p>Full class will not meet this week—mock clerkship interviews</p>	

Class 5: Week of June 16, 2025	Full class will not meet this week—oral presentations of bench memos	
Class 6: Week of June 23, 2025	Watch Oral Argument in U.S. Court of Appeals case TBD	• FINAL ASSIGNMENT: judicial opinion drawn from your bench memo
Class 7: Week of June 30, 2025	Full class will not meet this week—individual meetings to discuss mock interview results and other professional goals	
	Final judicial opinion due via email to RLuther@gmu.edu by 11:59 pm EST on July 4, 2025.	