City University of Hong Kong

Information on a Course
offered by Department of English
with effect from Semester A in 2012 / 2013

Part I

Course Title: English for Law

Course Code: EN 5112

Course Duration: 1 semester

Credit Units: 3

Level: P5

Medium of Instruction: English

Teaching pattern: Lecture and tutorial

Prerequisites: Nil

Precursors: Nil

Equivalent Courses: Nil

Exclusive Courses: Nil

Part II

Course Aims

This course aims to develop students' ability to understand the language used in a variety of legal contexts and to express some legal genres in styles appropriate for different audiences. Upon completing the course, students will be able to:

- Describe the communication problems arising from legal texts
- Analyze some of the genres used in legal settings
- Express the content of legal texts in simple and plain English

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

No.	CILOs	Weighting (if applicable)
1.	Identify, describe and analyse linguistic and discourse properties in authentic examples of legal language and apply the understandings gained to the legal texts that they encounter in their own lives	
2.	Rewrite authentic legal texts in a more accessible way intended for a specialist audience	
3.	Rewrite authentic legal texts in simple and plain English intended for a non-specialist audience	

Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

(Indicative of likely activities and tasks designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs. Final details will be provided to students in their first week of attendance in this course)

CILO No.	TLAs	Hours/week (if applicable)
CILOS 1-3	Assigned reading and interactive lectures about key concepts, including: • Linguistic and discourse properties of authentic examples of legal language • The accessibility of legal texts to specialist and non-specialist audiences • Genre analysis of legal texts	
CILOS 1-3	Hands-on analysis of legal genres, identifying, describing and analysing the features below, applying the knowledge generated to legal texts that students encounter in their own context of situation. Analysis will focus on: • Communicative purpose • Cognitive structuring • Generic structure • Typical linguistic features • Possible communication problems	
CILOS 2-3	Rewriting legal texts in simple and plain English, as well as through innovative, visual means of presentation, for both specialist and non-specialist audiences	

Assessment Tasks/Activities

(Indicative of likely activities and tasks designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs. Final details will be provided to students in their first week of attendance in this course)

CILO No.	Type of Assessment Tasks/Activities	Weighting	Remarks
CILO 1	**Group work project: Text analysis** Students will locate a meaningful legal text from their own situational context. Students will identify, describe and analyze linguistic and discourse features of that text. Students will present the analysis to the class. Students will work in groups but will be assessed individually.	25%	
CILO 2	**Group work project: Rewriting a legal text** Students will locate a meaningful legal text from their own situational context, which they can analyse and rewrite. Applying the methodology learned in	25%	

		class, students will identify the core meanings of the text, and creatively rewrite the text in a more accessible way intended for a specialist audience. Students will present their rewritten text to the class with justifications. Students will work in groups but be assessed individually.		
CILO 3	**Group work project: Rewriting a legal text** Students will locate a meaningful legal text from their own situational context, which they can analyse and rewrite.. Applying the methodology learned in class students will identify the core meanings, and creatively rewrite the text in simple and plain English intended for a non-specialist audience. Students will also draw on innovative, visual forms of communication. Students will present their rewritten text to the class with justifications. Students will work in groups but be assessed individually.	25%	
CILOS 1-3	**Individual project to create and maintain a reflective portfolio** Students will create a portfolio of analyses and rewritten versions of legal texts created throughout the duration of the course. Students will revise this work in light of peer feedback, and justify the revisions made. Students will make connections between the activities on the course, and situations that arise in their everyday lives.	25%	

Grading of Student Achievement:

Grading pattern: Standard (A+, A, A-.....F). Grading is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities.

Part III

Keyword Syllabus

Variation in language use, Register and Genres, Legal genre, Legislative writing, Genre analysis, Plain English Campaign, Simplification and Easification of Legal Genres, Language in the Courtroom, Cross-examination, Specialist and Non-specialist audiences

Recommended Reading
Text(s)

<u>Essential reading</u>

Bhatia, V. K. (1993). *Analysing genre: Language use in professional settings*.
        London: Longman.

Charrow, V., R., Erhardt, M., K., & Charrow, R., P. (2001). *Clear and Effective Legal*

Writing. New York: Aspen Law & Business.

Supplementary reading

Asprey, M. M. (1996). *Plain language for lawyers* (2 ed.). Leichhardt, NSW: Federation Press.

Bhatia, V. K. (1983). Simplification v. easification: The case of legal texts. *Applied Linguistics, 4*(1), 42-54.

Bhatia, V. K. (1987). Language of the law. *Language Teaching, 20*(4), 227-234.

Bhatia, V. K. (1987). Textual-mapping in British legislative writing. *World Englishes, 6*(1), 1-10.

Bhatia, V. K. (2004). *Worlds of written discourse: A genre-based view*. London: Continuum.

Crystal, D., & Davy, D. (1969). The language of legal documents. In D. Crystal & D. Davy (Eds.), *Investigating English Style* (pp. 193-217). Harlow: Longman.

Danet, B. (1985). Legal discourse. In T. A. v. Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of discourse analysis: Volume 1: Disciplines of discourse* (pp. 273-291). London: Academic Press.

Drew, P. (1985). Analyzing the use of language in courtroom interaction. In T. A. Van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of discourse analysis: Volume 3: Discourse and dialogue* (pp. 133–147). London: Academic Press.

Eagleson, R. D. (1988). Efficiency in legal drafting. In D. Kelly (Ed.), *Essays on Legislative Drafting: In Honour of JQ Ewens, CMG, CBE, QC.* (pp. 13-27). Adelaide: University of Adelaide, The Adelaide Law Review Association Law School.

Kimble, J. (1992). Plain English: A charter for clear writing. *Thomas M. Cooley Law Review, 9*(1), 1-58.

Maley, Y. (1985). Judicial discourse: The case of the legal judgment. *Beitrage zur Phonetic und Linguistik, 48*, 159-173.

Maley, Y. (1994). The language of the law. In J. Gibson (Ed.), *Language and the law* (pp. 11-50). Harlow: Longman.

Mellinkoff, D. (1963). *The language of the law*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Renton, D. (1975). *The preparation of legislation: Report of a committee appointed by the Lord President of the Council.* London: HMSO.

Wydick, R. C. (2005). *Plain English for lawyers* (5th ed.). Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Online Resources

The Bilingual Laws Information System Legislation Database

http://www.legislation.gov.hk

The Hong Kong Judiciary
http://www.judiciary.gov.hk