

To: Students
From: Prof. Eric E. Johnson
Re: **INSTRUCTIONS for “Petition for Writ of Supervision”
(i.e., glorified intake form for supervising student papers)**
Rev. Date: Sept. 1, 2025

I really enjoy supervising student papers in law school. And I’ve done a lot of them at this point. So I’ve developed a process, and the attached intake form is part of that.

Instead of calling it an “intake form,” however, I figured why not make it fancy-sounding? So I’m calling it a “petition for writ of supervision.”

If you would like me to supervise your paper, please fill it out. It starts on the next page. Printing it out and filling in blanks by hand is probably easiest. Then you can hand deliver it to the faculty support office (in which case please email me so I know to grab it asap). Or you can scan it and email it.

I’m not trying to deter anyone with a paperwork burden! I’m asking you to do this because **(1) I want to help you produce a great paper** and because **(2) I want both of us to have clarity about what needs to get done and when.**

Writing a paper is a huge investment of time and energy – and it will be whether you end up with a meh paper or a fantastic one. So let’s aim high. **I want you to have something that you will be really proud of.** And **ideally I’d like to see all my advisee’s papers published**, either as a note or comment in an OU journal or via an independent submission to some other legal publication (I’m happy to strategize with you about this).

Writing an excellent paper does not necessarily require more time. The key is working effectively and efficiently. Working smarter, not harder. And I can help you with that. Law students habitually tend to run into the same sorts of stumbling blocks when they do the researching and the writing. So I’ve tried to map those out and develop a process that will steer students clear. And not just *eventually*. I want to help get students headed down the right path right from the start. Having you submit this “petition” is my first step in **helping you avoid dead-ends and get straight to the crucial stuff before you write the draft that I’ll review.**

A few notes about some of the specific commitments solicited by the “petition”:

- I’m asking you to read and re-read **Pam Samuelson’s** short (7,500 words or so) essay on writing academic law papers because it is the **best value going in how-to guides**. It’s a brilliantly concise advice on efficient and effective writing. And it’s free.
- Format facilitates functionality. So I’m giving you **clear expectations on format** for the comment draft I’ll read. I have, in the past, had papers turned in without a title, without the author’s name, without a date, with endnotes instead of footnotes, and even without page numbers(!). All of these things are bad, and all will be avoided now thanks to your advance commitment via this petition. ☺
- **Picking a topic and thesis** that is workable and that will be rewarding for you is the **most important piece of the whole project**. Unfortunately, schedules usually require you to do that fast. Nonetheless, it’s crucial that you’ve thought carefully about topic and thesis and that you’ve done some advance work so that you’ll be set up for success. That’s why I’m requiring an attachment to the “petition” with a *very* short statement about your topic, projected thesis, and preliminary/exploratory research you’ve done.
- The petition’s list of things to do and to not do in your comment draft is intended as a **useful checklist when you’re writing**. I hope to put you on a glidepath to efficiently producing a solid paper.

ADDRESSED TO
PROFESSOR ERIC E. JOHNSON

PETITION FOR
WRIT OF SUPERVISION

[Name of petitioning student]

IN THE MATTER OF

[Working title of paper]

I, the above-named student, hereby petition (i.e., “ask”) Prof. Eric E. Johnson to supervise the above referenced paper for *[check all that apply]*:

- ☐ the Graduation Writing Requirement
- ☐ Comment or note for American Indian Law Review
- ☐ Comment or note for Oklahoma Law Review
- ☐ Comment or note for ONE-J
- ☐ Directed Legal Research (“DLR”) for ____ credits, for a letter grade
- ☐ Other: _____

My date of planned graduation is: _____

Declarations:

[Petitioning student to initial in the blank of each paragraph below]

_____ I represent and warrant that I have completed reading Pam Samuelson’s 1984 article *Good Legal Writing: of Orwell and Window Panes*. I either found the article by its official cite, which is Pamela Samuelson, *Good Legal Writing: Of Orwell and Window Panes*, 46 U. PITT. L. REV. 149 (1984), or I read an unpaywalled version at <https://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~pam/papers/goodwriting.html>, or I read it some other way.

_____ I understand that submitting this petition, submitting a comment draft to you, reviewing your feedback on that, and then submitting a final manuscript to you is the **minimum required, not a ceiling, in terms of what I submit to you and what feedback I will get from you**. I understand that **I can come talk to you throughout the weeks and months that I am working on the paper and talk things through, ask questions, and get additional advice.**

____ After I have done the bulk of my research and as I am beginning to work on writing the manuscript as such, I will at that point re-read Prof. Pam Samuelson's *Good Legal Writing* article. I will try to implement its advice.

____ My comment draft will have an introduction that has a very clearly stated claim (also known as a "thesis" or "central argument" – i.e., the proposition the paper seeks to persuade the reader of), and the balance of the paper will be devoted to upholding that claim.

____ I will organize my comment draft as necessary to support my claim.

____ I will not type up my research notes and submit that as my comment draft.

____ I will use the form of Bluebook citation style that is for law review articles, which can be found in the white-pages section of the Bluebook. I understand this is different than the practitioner citation style I learned in my first-year Legal Research, Writing & Analysis course. Among other things, I'll appropriately use SMALL CAPS for book and journal names, *italics* for law review article titles, and I won't use underlining. (But if my journal requires something other than Bluebook citation style, I understand I can ask you to waive this requirement.)

____ For the comment draft, I understand that I can take a shortcut with sources as follows: I am permitted to have footnotes that repeatedly provide citations for the same source as if that source is being cited for the first time – which can be helpful in case I might later move around blocks of text. Notwithstanding this allowance for the comment draft, I understand that for the final manuscript Bluebook citation style requires, among other things, the use of "*id.*" or "*supra*" for previously cited sources.

____ By the time I submit my comment draft, I will have searched through and familiarized myself with the relevant legal scholarly literature. Specifically, I will look for what has been written in law review articles about my claim and what has been written concerning its particular niche of law and of fact. And if I have not found any prior scholarship regarding my paper's particular subject matter, I will find the closest such scholarship and reference that.

____ The comment draft manuscript I give you will evidence my engagement with the relevant legal scholarly literature and will communicate to the reader what my paper is doing that is somehow different than what others have done previously – which is to say, show how my paper makes a "contribution" beyond what already exists.

____ When I turn in the comment draft of my manuscript – that is, the draft for you to look at, comment on, and give feedback on – that manuscript will:

- (1) have my name on it,
- (2) have page numbers,
- (3) have a title,

- (4) have footnotes,
- (5) not have endnotes,
- (6) have 1.75-inch margins on the top, bottom, left, and right,
- (7) be single-spaced (or ≤ 1.15 -spaced) and not double-spaced
- (8) have a conspicuous date on the first page, above the title, in the format *Draft of YYYY-MM-DD*,
- (9) be submitted as a DOCX file with the filename in the format of *Lastname slug YYYY-MM-DD.docx*, where the “slug” is a one- or two-word identifier for the paper, such that if my name were Sumaiya W. Hodges, my paper was about design patents on genetically engineered dinosaurs, and the date of the draft paper was January 6, 2026, then the filename would look like this: Hodges dino designs 2026-01-06.docx.

____ **Attached to this petition is a very brief description of my (1) topic, (2) projected claim, and (3) the exploratory research I’ve already done.** *[This statement need not be long! Just 100 words could be enough. Beyond 200 words is probably too much. About the three things: (1) The “topic” is the subject-matter area within which your paper falls. Presumably there will be other papers within the same topic. The topic can be stated as a phrase (e.g., “the Ninth Amendment”). (2) The paper’s “claim” (or “thesis” or “central argument”) is the proposition that you want the reader to be convinced of after reading your paper. A claim is stated as a sentence – it needs at least a subject and a verb (e.g., “The Ninth Amendment should be repealed because it has a substantial negative effect on technological innovation.”) You don’t have to be certain about your claim right now. You might have a projected claim that you later alter. You might have some alternative formulations you are considering. But you have to at least provisionally identify something along the lines of a proposition to be advanced by your paper. While there may be much written within your topic, your paper’s claim needs to be, at least in its narrow form, something new. (3) A brief description of initial research you’ve done helps provide a bulwark against later-regretted topic/thesis choices. Just say something about where and how you looked – no cites! You must, at least, have looked to some extent through the legal scholarly literature – which is to say, more or less, law review articles. It’s up to you to decide if you need to look elsewhere – court cases, news/industry reports, academic publications outside of law – in advance of your topic/thesis identification.]*

____ **Regarding the deadlines filled-in below:** (1) I understand and expect that **it will take two weeks** from the Comment Draft Deadline for you (the professor) to provide me (the student) with comments and feedback. (2) After getting your feedback (i.e., two weeks after the Comment Draft Deadline), there will then be adequate time such that I can absorb and act on that feedback, do any necessary additional research, and make useful revisions to the paper, before I must submit the final version of the paper to any third party (such as my journal), if applicable, and to you for grading and/or evaluation for meeting the Graduation Writing Requirement (as applicable). (3) The Final Manuscript Deadline must allow adequate time for you (the professor) to review the paper for fulfillment of the Graduation Writing Requirement (if applicable) and grade it (if applicable). I understand that I can and probably should pick a date at least slightly after any third-party/journal-imposed deadline, because that can avoid needless stress.

Self-selected deadlines:

Comment Draft Deadline:

I will turn in my comment draft manuscript to you by: _____

Final Manuscript Deadline:

I will turn in my final manuscript to you by: _____

Journal-imposed or third-party deadline, if applicable:

I must turn in my final paper to _____

by the date of _____.

SUBMITTED by the petitioning student:

Signed: _____

Name printed: _____

Date: _____