

Subject Code	ENGL308
Subject Title	Understanding English Legal Texts
Credit Value	3
Level	3
Pre-requisite / Co-requisite/ Exclusion	None
Objectives	The subject enables students to understand the relationship between language and the law and how they work together in professional settings. Training in analyzing linguistic features, investigating cognitive structures and interpreting meanings of various types of legal texts will help develop students as effective communicators. In the process of developing a critical understanding of legal texts, students will be able to develop their abilities in problem solving, critical and strategic thinking.
Intended Learning Outcomes	<p>Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:</p> <p>Category A: Professional/academic knowledge and skills</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. demonstrate an understanding of legal discourse; b. identify and analyse the characteristics of legal English; c. interpret the cognitive structure of legal judgments and legislative provisions; d. evaluate the effectiveness of legal texts in relation to their language use and structure; e. apply plain Legal English principles in rewriting complex legal texts for the purpose of reader accessibility; f. interpret legislative provisions and synthesize them in legal issues diagnosed. <p>Category B: Attributes for all-roundedness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> g. display critical and creative thinking; h. extend and enhance strategies for learning autonomously and collaboratively;
Subject Synopsis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General background to the law and Hong Kong legal system 2. Syntactic and lexical features of legal language 3. Critical analysis of legal texts 4. Rhetorical principles of legal writing 5. Principles of writing plain legal English 6. Summarizing and understanding legal judgements
Teaching/ Learning Methodology	A task-based approach will be employed. The class sessions will consist of seminars, workshops and discussions. Students are required to investigate the linguistic features of legal texts and

	evaluate their effectiveness in the form of a seminar; to participate in workshops of writing plain legal English; and to present summaries of legal issues from the relevant ordinances.											
Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes	Specific assessment methods/tasks		% weighting		Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)							
					a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
	1. In-class assignment		30%		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
	2. Written Report		70%		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
	Total		100 %									
<p>Students will be assessed through coursework in the forms of 1) an in-class writing task and 2) a written report.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Students will be required to re-write legal texts which are written in complex language structures using plain English in a one-hour in-class assignment, students will be assessed on an individual basis. Each student will be required to write a report of approximately 1,000 words, applying relevant ordinances to discuss a legal issue from a Hong Kong business context. 												
Student Study Effort Required	Class contact:											
	▪ Lectures											26 Hrs.
	▪ Seminars											13 Hrs.
	Other student study effort:											
	▪ Private study											58 Hrs.
	▪ Take-home assignments											29 Hrs.
	Total student study effort											126 Hrs.
Reading List and References	<p>Reading List</p> <p>Bhatia, V. 1993 <i>Analyzing Genre: Language use in Professional Settings</i>. London: Longman</p> <p>Bhatia, V. 1994 <i>Cognitive structuring in legislative provisions</i> In Gibbons, J. <i>Language and the Law</i>. p.136-155. New York: Longman</p> <p>Crystal, D. & Davy D. 1969 <i>The Language of legal documents</i> In <i>Investigating English Style</i>. London. p.193-217. New York: Longman</p> <p>Dobinson, I & Roebuck, D. 2001 <i>Introduction to Law in the Hong</i></p>											

Kong SAR (2nd ed) Hong Kong: Sweet & Maxwell Asia
Garner B. 2001 *Legal Writing in Plain English*. US: University of Chicago Press
Gibbons, J. 2003 *Forensic Linguistic: An Introduction to Language in the Justice System*. Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing

Authentic contracts, terms and conditions, legislations and legal judgements

On-line Resources:

Bilingual Laws Information System
<http://www.legislation.gov.hk/eng/index.htm>
Dictionary for Legal Professionals
<http://dictionary.lp.findlaw.com>

Prepared by Xunfeng Xu and Daisy Chow; Revised by Xunfeng Xu in June 2014