# Simplified Legal Citation Guidelines

# for Legal Studies/Env Studies/History 430

Most law schools in the U.S. use the guidelines of the *Bluebook* for the style of citing cases, laws, and other legal sources. But these take some time to learn. For students in this class, except for those who are currently in law school or have law degrees, we will use the modified system described below.

This system follows the guidelines of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (*CMOS*), which itself usually defers to the *Bluebook*, but our system also includes some unique features. A recent edition of the *CMOS* (the 17th) is available online through the UW library (which requires a net-ID log-in if you are off-campus). The explanations below draw on *CMOS*, Notes and Bibliography, ch. 14, sections 270, 274, 276, etc., for case law; and ch. 14, sections 280, 282, etc., for constitutions and statutory laws.

# How do I refer to a court case, in the body of my paper?

**Case title (and year)** (*CMOS* 14.276). The main way to refer to a legal case is by using the case title, which consists of **the names of the two parties, separated by the abbreviation "*v.*"** All of these elements should be **italicized** (set in italic typeface), whether the case title appears within the text of your paper, in the notes, or in the bibliography. Normally within the text of your paper, cases are referenced using ONLY the case title; **on first mention you should also include the year** (in parentheses, unless your sentence already mentions the year).

Note: the approach required for this class is a bit different from the style of the *Bluebook*, which recommends using italics for case titles within a text, but (regular) Roman typeface for case titles in notes or bibliographies.

# How do I cite a court case, in a note or bibliography?

To cite a legal case in your notes or bibliography, you begin with the case title (see above), but then also add additional information, which allows the reader both to find your source for the case and to identify the court and date of the decision. The specific parts of a legal citation are explained below.

*Note: **full information** for a legal case is provided only for your **first reference to it in a footnote and in the bibliography**. For **all subsequent references in the notes you should use a "short form,"** which includes just the case title and specific page numbers being referenced. (The same 'short form' approach to subsequent references in notes also applies to citing non-legal

sources; see the open-access website, *CMOS Quick Guide*; then click on 'Notes and Bibliography;' then scroll to many examples of "shortened note" provided for each type of citation.)

**1. Case title**: a citation to a court case should begin with the case title, which as explained above, consists of the two parties and the abbreviation *v.*, all in italics.

**2. Law reporter.** The next elements after the case title usually begin with a reference to the "reporter," or the standard publication that prints court decisions (such as the *Federal Reporter*). This begins with the volume number (in Arabic numerals), then the abbreviated name of the reporter, then the ordinal series number of the reporter (if applicable), and finally the page number(s).

Note: in *Bluebook* style usually only the first page of a decision is provided, plus when applicable a second page number that refers to the specific page that is being cited. But for this class, **you should include the full range of pages covered by the decision and then the specific page(s) which you are referencing**. In a subsequent citation to a decision already cited, you should use a shortened citation, which omits the full page range, and just provides the specific page(s) being referenced, preceded by *at* (see example 3 below); absence of *at* implies reference to the decision as a whole (example 4).

**3. Electronic database, such as Lexis-Uni.** When such a database is your source for a case, you may provide a citation to the database instead of the above "reporter" information (or you may include both). Database citations normally include the case's docket number, the name of the database, and any identifying date and number assigned to the case by the database. References to page or screen numbers are preceded by an asterisk. Short forms may include only the database identifier. See the examples below, nos. 6-9.

\*Note: provide database citations **ONLY for those databases you have <u>actually used</u>**. Do NOT just copy and paste citations for those databases you do not use .

**4. Court and year**. Finally, the citation should include, in parentheses, both **the name of the court and the date.** Ideally the date should include the month, day, and year. **For the Supreme Court, just add "U.S. Supreme Court." For all other U.S. federal or state courts, please spell out the name of the court in full** (rather than abbreviating these names, as *Bluebook* style allows). Any other relevant information follows these first three or four items.

# Examples of Citations to Court Cases

(From *CMOS* 14.276.) \*Note that examples nos. 3 and 4 include 'short form' citations to cases cited more fully in examples nos. 1 and 2.

1. *United States v. Christmas*, 222 F.3d 141, 145 (4th Cir. 2000).

2. *Profit Sharing Plan v. Mbank Dallas, N.A.*, 683 F. Supp. 592 (N.D. Tex. 1988).

3. *Christmas*, 222 F.3d at 145. The court also noted that under *United States v. Sokolow*, 490 U.S. 1, 7 (1989), police may briefly detain a person without probable cause if the officer believes criminal activity "may be afoot." *Christmas*, 222 F.3d at 143; *see also Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1 (1968).

4. *Profit Sharing Plan*, 683 F. Supp. 592.

Cases consulted online should normally be cited to the appropriate reporter(s). Though rarely used in *Bluebook*-style citations, a **URL that points directly to an official resource may be appended as shown here**:

5. *State v. Griffin*, 211 W. Va. 508, 566 S.E.2d 645 (2002), [http://www.courtswv.gov/supreme-court/docs/spring2002/30433.htm](http://www.courtswv.gov/supreme-court/docs/spring2002/30433.htm).

Examples nos. 6-9 cite databases as sources. Note that examples nos. 8 and 9 provide 'short form' citations for cases cited more fully in examples nos. 6 and 7. Note also that 'WL' is the abbreviation for *Westlaw*.

6. *Family Serv. Ass'n v. Wells Twp.*, No. 14-4020, 2015 U.S. App. LEXIS 6174 (6th Cir. Apr. 16, 2015).

7. *In re* D.S., No. 13-0888, 2014 WL 1495489 (Iowa Ct. App. Apr. 16, 2014).

8. *Family Serv. Ass'n*, 2015 U.S. App. LEXIS 6174, at *5.

9. *D.S.*, 2014 WL 1495489, at *1.

**For online sources, put the URL at the end of the reference** (from *CMOS* 14.270):

For citations of cases, constitutions and statutes, print sources are preferred, but online versions authenticated by a government entity or considered to be the official version (or an exact copy thereof) can be treated as if they were print. **If a URL is required, as is the case for this class, then it should be appended as the last element of the citation**; see example no. 5 above. Citations of sources consulted through commercial databases such as Westlaw or LexisNexis should include the database name and any applicable identification number (or, in the case of constitutions and statutes, information about the currency of the database).

**Other abbreviations** used in citations of court cases (from *CMOS*, 14.274):

In citations (but not in running text), *Bluebook* style specifies *2d* and *3d* rather than *2nd* and *3rd* for ordinals and capitalizes abbreviations like *No.* and *Sess.* The following example cites a decision by the **United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit**, reported in volume 206 of the *Federal Reporter*, third series, beginning on page 752.

*NLRB v. Somerville Constr. Co.*, 206 F.3d 752, 752 (7th Cir. 2000).

Note: while all the above examples use the highly abbreviated approach used by law schools and lawyers, for this class, whenever possible, **you should SPELL OUT key information more fully; this applies especially to the names of the courts involved**. So in the last example given above:

**7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2000 = U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, 2000** (and here it would be best if a month and a day could be added to make the date more precise).

# How do I cite the U.S. and state constitutions?

From *CMOS* 14.280: In citations to constitutions, the article and amendment numbers appear in roman numerals; other subdivision numbers are in arabic. In *Bluebook* style the name of the constitution is capitalized; other abbreviations are lower case.

*Note: in your notes and bibliography, you should use the traditional, 'long' form for citing the U.S. Constitution, as in the first part of example 1 below. Use a similar long form for citing the amendments and the preamble, as in example 2 below. But when you cite the U.S. Constitution within your text, and you are referring to anything within its seven main articles (i.e., everything except the preamble and the amendments), you should use an all-Arabic-number format, using "C" for the Constitution, then the numbers **1-7 for each of the seven main articles**, then additional Arabic numbers for the sections and clauses being cited, with the numbers separated by periods.

1. U.S. Const. art. I, § 4, cl. 2. = **C1.4.2.**

2. U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 2.

State Constitutions  *Note: for this class, please spell out the name of the state.

3. Ariz. Const. art. VII, § 5.

4. Ark. Const. of 1868, art. III, § 2 (superseded 1874).

# How do I cite (federal) statutory laws?

From *CMOS* 14.282: Bills or joint resolutions that have been signed into law—"**public laws**," or **statutes**—are first published separately, as **slip laws**, and then collected in the annual bound volumes of the ***United States Statutes at Large*** (abbreviated in legal style as "**Stat.**"), where they are referred to as **session laws**. Later they are incorporated into the ***United States Code* (U.S.C.)**.

Examples:

1. Homeland Security Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-296, 116 Stat. 2135 (2012).

2. Homeland Security Act of 2002, 6 U.S.C. § 101 (2012).

*Note: while the above style fits *Bluebook* requirements, for this class you should **add the full date (with day and month)** of the original law, right after the law's title (using a comma, without "of").

*Also, after the citation to the *Statutes-at-Large*, you should **add a citation to the same law in its codified form in the USC**, providing: the relevant title number within the code (1-54); the abbreviation "USC" (without periods is fine); and then, if known, the chapter number, and finally the section number(s). For examples of citations to the USC, see the University of Akron webpage linked below, "Statutes - How to Cite." For this class, if possible, please provide **the full range of relevant sections in the USC** when appropriate and known.

*Note: the above examples are for footnotes. **In a bibliographical entry** for these laws, everything would be the same, except that **the main elements of the reference** (i.e., the P.L. number is one element; the Stat. reference is another, etc.) would be **separated not by commas, but by periods**.

# Additional Web Resources

For some very **clear diagrams** of what legal citations contain, see Boston College Law Library's site on "Reading Legal Citations," which includes, for example, pages on "Case Citations" and "Statutory Citations."

For fuller explanations and additional examples of *Bluebook* citations and abbreviations, see the excellent site maintained by the University of Akron's School of Law, Bluebook Quick Reference—Abbreviations and How-tos, especially such pages as, "Cases – How to Cite," and "U.S. Federal Court Abbreviations;" and "Statutes - How to Cite" (though this last page focuses mainly on the US Code).