



ARTICLE

Integrating Generative AI into Legal Writing Pedagogy: Preparing Law Students for an AI-Driven Future

Erica F. Byrd

Senior Lecturer

Georgia State University College of Law

Published: December 2025

I. Introduction

Generative AI tools like ChatGPT are changing how we think about writing in nearly every profession, including the legal field. For legal writing professors, this development presents both a challenge and an opportunity: how do we prepare students to write effectively in a world where AI can generate a full draft in seconds?

This piece shares a classroom-tested assignment that introduces students to generative AI while reinforcing the fundamentals of legal writing. The goal isn't to replace traditional writing skills, but to teach students how to use these new tools thoughtfully, ethically, and professionally. The assignment focuses on drafting and revising a client letter, and it encourages students to reflect on what good legal writing looks like, whether it comes from a human or a machine. By asking students to draft, revise, and analyze a client letter using generative AI, we can foster their professional identity, develop their critical thinking skills, and enhance their ability to communicate effectively.

2. Why Bring AI into the Legal Writing Classroom?

The American Bar Association has recognized the growing importance of technological proficiency in legal practice. Comment 8 to Model Rule 1.1 of the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct explains that to maintain competence, lawyers "should keep abreast of changes in the law and its practice, including the benefits and risks associated with relevant technology. . ."¹ This guidance reinforces the idea that understanding and responsibly using tools like generative AI is essential for competent modern lawyering. Incorporating AI tools into legal writing instruction not only aligns with these professional standards but also prepares students to meet the evolving demands of the legal field.

Furthermore, AI is already a part of contemporary legal practice. In fact, Generative AI tools are becoming ubiquitous in the legal profession and are being used for numerous tasks such as drafting documents and generating legal arguments. While the tools are far from perfect, they are increasingly becoming part of the everyday practice of law. Supervisors and clients are increasingly likely to expect attorneys to have a base level of knowledge of how to use AI and expect finished work product in a quicker timeframe. Ignoring AI tools in the classroom risks leaving students unprepared for the tools they'll encounter in their summer jobs or post-graduation roles.

Using AI-generated text in the classroom also serves as a springboard for rich discussion. Students can debate issues of tone, audience, clarity, and even legal ethics. Having these discussions in the classroom allows students to quickly see that AI doesn't absolve them of responsibility; rather, it merely shifts the focus of the writer's task.

In addition, using AI in the classroom reinforces fundamental legal writing skills. Rather than replacing or diminishing core writing instruction, as some educators may fear, using AI in the classroom has the potential to

¹ Model Rules of Pro. Conduct r.1.1, Comment 8 (A.B.A. 1983) https://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/publications/model_rules_of_professional_conduct/rule_1_1_competence/comment_on_rule_1_1/

actually enhance and support core legal writing skills. By requiring students to critique, revise, and reframe AI-generated content, the assignment detailed in this piece draws students' attention to essential aspects of legal writing, such as clarity, structure, and tone, ultimately deepening their understanding through active engagement. Specifically, when they critique an AI-generated draft, students draw on the same skills they use when they revise their own work, such as identifying vague language, correcting tone, and clarifying legal reasoning. The key difference between critiquing AI-generated work and the students' own work is that an AI-generated draft provides a neutral, imperfect draft for critique, which often lowers the stakes and fosters confidence.

3. Preparing for the Assignment

Before introducing the AI drafting assignment, I had already spent time in class building a foundation. Specifically, in the first semester of 1L legal writing, the students draft more than one full client letter independently, which allows them to develop and demonstrate baseline competencies in tone, clarity, organization, and audience. This early writing work grounds their understanding of effective client communication before we layer in the complexities of AI-assisted drafting in the second semester.

Once we transition into AI in the second semester, we engage in comprehensive discussions on the role of generative AI in legal practice. We cover a range of topics in these discussions, including common uses of AI in legal settings; best practices for prompt design; ethical considerations, including confidentiality and unauthorized practice concerns; and pitfalls and limitations of relying on AI-generated content. Students are always particularly interested in real-world disciplinary actions against attorneys who have submitted filings with hallucinated case law (fabricated or fictional case citations generated by AI tools that appear legitimate but do not exist) or who have failed to review AI-generated text before filing. These cautionary tales make the ethical stakes of AI use in legal practice feel more immediate and relevant.

We also discuss the importance of ensuring that students can competently complete legal writing tasks without the assistance of AI. I emphasize that while these tools can be valuable, they may not always be available, whether because of institutional or jurisdictional restrictions, technological

failures, or ethical prohibitions. Ensuring that students can write clearly, accurately, and persuasively on their own remains a core priority.

These conversations help students develop a critical framework for using AI tools responsibly and professionally. They gain a clearer understanding of the importance of independent drafting competency, thoughtful prompt construction, the potential for misuse, and the ethical boundaries they must respect as future legal professionals. Only after these foundational discussions do we move into the assignment itself.

4. The Assignment: Drafting and Revising a Client Letter with AI

Here's how the assignment works:

Step 1: Generate a First Draft

Midway through the second semester of their first year, students begin by using a generative AI tool (I ask my students to use ChatGPT) to draft a client letter. They use the same fact pattern and materials they are working with for their Appellate Brief assignment, and they are told to prompt the AI to generate a professional and client-appropriate letter. The letter must accomplish several specific goals, as outlined in the assignment instructions. Specifically, given the timing for when my students draft the letter, they are asked to provide the client with an update on the status of the appeal, give a brief overview of the appellate process, and summarize key portions of the Appellate Brief that have been drafted to date, such as the issue statement and core arguments for the brief.

Step 2: Revise the Letter

Next, students revise the AI draft to meet professional legal standards. Some of the areas they are asked to focus on include: tone (is it respectful, reassuring, clear?); clarity (does it explain the issue in plain language?); legal accuracy (are any changes or additions needed to ensure correctness?); and, audience awareness (is this the right level of detail for the client?). Once these steps are complete, students submit a final version of the letter with redlining to indicate all changes made to the AI-generated letter, as well as all prompts they used during the drafting process.

Step 3: Instructor Review and Feedback

After students submit their final redlined letters and prompts, I review the materials with several goals in mind. First, I evaluate how effectively students revised the AI-generated draft, focusing on tone, clarity, legal accuracy, and audience awareness, as mentioned above. Next, I consider how well students met the assignment objectives, such as explaining the appellate process and summarizing key arguments.

In addition, I closely examine the students' AI prompts to assess whether their prompts provided sufficient detail to generate a useful draft and whether they demonstrated an understanding of how to guide the AI tool effectively through the use of iterative prompts. Occasionally, students include too little information, leading to vague or generic outputs. Others may go too far in the opposite direction, uploading their entire Appellate Brief case file, or inadvertently sharing confidential information. Both of these scenarios provide opportunities for teaching about best practices and professional responsibility.

In providing feedback, I emphasize both strengths and areas for growth. I often include comments that highlight successful revisions, note opportunities for improved client communication, critique prompt design, and raise questions for further reflection. This review process reinforces students' understanding of revision and prompt construction as essential components of professional legal writing in the age of AI.

5. What Students Learn

This assignment supports a wide range of student learning outcomes, both technical and conceptual. First, it introduces students to AI-assisted drafting in a meaningful context while reinforcing essential components of legal writing. Through practical, concrete use of generative AI, students begin to understand both the capabilities and limitations of the tool. They learn that while AI can assist in drafting, it cannot replace the lawyer's responsibility for accuracy, tone, and ethical judgment.

Next, this assignment allows students to gain practical, hands-on experience with generative AI, which helps demystify the technology and reinforces that while AI can be a helpful tool, it has important limitations. Rather than replacing the student writer, AI becomes a drafting partner that requires careful oversight and editing.

In addition, starting with an AI-generated draft sharpens students' revision skills. Because they are working with a document they didn't author, many students feel more comfortable identifying weaknesses in structure, tone, and clarity, an exercise that leads to a deeper understanding of effective writing practices.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the assignment raises important ethical questions in a concrete way. Students confront issues such as whether and how to disclose AI use to a client, and what to do when AI offers inaccurate or misleading content. These moments invite thoughtful discussion about the limits of AI and the professional responsibilities that remain firmly in human hands. Ultimately, the assignment offers a multifaceted learning experience that blends technical skill development with ethical and critical reflection.

6. Classroom Takeaways

While implementing this assignment, I noticed a wide range of student reactions and experiences. Some students were eager to explore AI tools, while others approached the technology with hesitation or skepticism. This variation often stemmed from differing levels of familiarity with AI—while some had used generative AI extensively in other contexts, others had no prior exposure. Students consistently expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage with AI in a structured academic setting, rather than relying on trial and error. Many shared that it was the first time they received explicit instruction on best practices, limitations, and ethical use of AI tools.

Nearly all students became more engaged with the process of revision and more distinctly aware of the significance of audience-centered communication. The assignment helped them view their role not only as writers,

but also as editors, thoughtful communicators, and emerging legal professionals who must make deliberate and ethical choices about the tools they use.

7. Conclusion

Generative AI is here to stay. By integrating it into the legal writing classroom, we can prepare students to navigate its promises and pitfalls with skill and judgment. More importantly, we can help them strengthen some of the core competencies of legal communication: clarity, precision, ethics, and audience awareness.

This client letter assignment is just one model for integrating AI into the legal writing classroom. I regularly brainstorm additional opportunities to support student learning and skill development related to AI and legal writing. As AI tools continue to evolve, I envision increased opportunities to design exercises that help students practice critical thinking, legal analysis, and editorial judgment in technology-enhanced environments.

I encourage students to view the AI-assisted drafting of the client letter as a beginning, not an end to their use of AI tools. I also encourage my students to continue experimenting with generative AI tools after this assignment (provided their use does not violate academic integrity or other institutional policies, of course). Students might, for example, use generative AI to brainstorm potential counterarguments for written or oral advocacy, generate questions based on their current understanding of an issue, or translate complex legal topics into clear, accessible language. The more they engage with these tools in a mindful, intentional way, the more prepared they will be to use them responsibly in their future legal careers.