Legal Information

For Academic Studies in the Behavioral Sciences
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1. Defining the phrase “case law.”
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2. Understanding the basic U.S. court system structure.
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2. Understanding the basic U.S. court system structure.

3. Locating and accessing appropriate case law.
“Case” or “Common” law comes from decisions made by judges.
The legal principles cited in a common-law case can be influential, but...

a primary aspect in legal research is how to distinguish one case from another
Court cases are available through publications called reporters.
Regional reporters provide information from important case decisions.

North Western Reporter

Iowa, Michigan
Minnesota,
Nebraska
North Dakota,
South Dakota &
Wisconsin
Nebraska is in the 8th circuit.

Cases are reported in the Federal Supplement Reporter in Westlaw & LexisNexis.
Nebraska is in the 8th circuit

Cases are reported in the Federal Supplement Reporter in Westlaw & LexisNexis
Each district has a court of appeals which hears appeals from the 94 judicial districts.
Three ways of accessing case law –

1. Do you have a citation?
2. Do you know the names of the plaintiff and defendant?
3. Do you have the topic?
1. Do you have the citation?

You often see them in textbooks.

The abbreviation indicates the reporter ~ U.S. means it was a Supreme Court decision.
Two databases make case decisions available

Available through UNO Criss Library @ library.unomaha.edu
Look it up at Criss Library
Select “Law” on the Database A-Z list
Criminal Justice Abstracts with Full-Text

Provides indexing, abstracts, and full-text for articles published in journals spanning several disciplines, emphasizing articles which address criminal justice. Topical coverage includes crime trends, crime prevention and deterrence, juvenile delinquency, juvenile justice, police, courts, punishment and sentencing. The database also offers indexing for books, government reports, and publications of research institutes.

Lexis Nexis Country Analysis

The Country Analysis module is available by clicking the Business tab on the Lexis-Nexis Academic homepage. This database pulls together online reports from several government sources which address international business and markets.

LexisNexis Academic Full-Text (LexisNexis)

This collection of databases and files remains almost a universe of its own, providing online access to articles published in hundreds of newspapers around the world as well as trade, industry, and government resources. Click the News link under the Search tab to select files such as U.S. Newspapers and Wires, Major World Newspapers, and Financial Times (London). Click the Business link under the Search tab to enter the Company Dossier file, where one can find information pulled together from many sources concerning thousands of companies. Click the Sources tab to explore files such as Companies & Organizations, Country & Region Reports, and Industries & Markets. Click the Legal tab to enter an area containing Federal and state court decisions, Federal and state codes and regulations, and a file containing online articles published in over 500 law review journals.


This database offers online access to several thousand papers written under the auspices of the NBER, a leading non-profit economic research organization. These papers have yet to undergo full peer review for formal publication, but they often represent cutting-edge research. Topical coverage ranges widely: children, corporate finance, economic growth, the elderly, health care, history of the American economy, industrial organization, international finance, international trade, labor, law, monetary policy, productivity and technological change, stocks, taxation, public economics, and government spending.

ProQuest Congressional

Indexes publications issued by Congress, including hearings, committee reports, committee documents, committee prints, and treaty documents. Records for hearings offer detailed notes listing witnesses and their pagination within the transcripts. Criss Library owns extensive microfiche archives which encompass almost all of these documents extending from 1790-1969, and the U.S. Documents collection provides access to most documents from 1970 onward.

Thomson Reuters Checkpoint

This database provides a comprehensive collection of online reference sources addressing Federal and state taxation research. These publications range across tax law, tax regulations, tax court decisions, other court decisions, and professional commentary; and they include a citator and articles published in professional taxation research journals.

U.S. Congressional Serial Set With American State Papers

The Congressional Serial Set is the primary publisher’s archive of Congressional committee reports and committee documents. During the 19th century, Congress also directed that many Executive department and agency reports be included. This database offers access to fully scanned and searchable documents, starting from 1817 and it is projected to extend to 1980. The American State Papers are a compilation of documents extending from 1789-1837, also fully scanned and searchable.

University of Southern California Law Legal Journals Listing Full-Text (University of Southern California Law Legal Journals Listing)

Contains open-access journals. Click detailed holdings to see which journals are included in this dataset.

Westlaw (Campus Research) Full-Text (Westlaw - Campus Research)

Provides online access to the published decisions of the federal courts and the appellate courts of all 50 states. Also includes federal and state codes and regulations and articles published in over 700 law review journals.
In LexisNexis...

Type in the citation ~ don’t forget the punctuation!

403 u.s. 349
2. Do you know the names of the plaintiff and defendant?

Type in the names in the “Parties” section of LexisNexis.
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

430 U.S. 349; 97 S. Ct. 1197; 51 L. Ed. 2d 393; 1977 U.S. LEXIS 62

Argued November 30, 1976
March 22, 1977;

PRIOR HISTORY: CERTIORARI TO THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

CASE SUMMARY

PROCEDURAL POSTURE: Defendant was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to death. The Supreme Court of Florida affirmed the death sentence. The United States Supreme Court granted certiorari.

OVERVIEW: In sentencing defendant to death, the trial judge stated that he relied in part on information in a presentence investigation report (PSR). Portions of that report were not disclosed to counsel for the parties. The state supreme court affirmed the death sentence without reviewing the confidential portion of the PSR. On certiorari, the Court vacated defendant's sentence. The Court concluded that the sentencing procedure did not satisfy the constitutional command that no person should be deprived of life without due process of law. Defendant argued that the sentencing court had erred in considering the PSR, including the confidential portion. The Court held that if the confidential information was the basis for the death sentence, the interest in reliability plainly outweighed the state's interest in preserving the availability of comparable information in other cases. The Court held that even if it were permissible to withhold a portion of the report from defendant, and even from defense counsel, pursuant to an express finding of good cause for nondisclosure, it would nevertheless be necessary to make the full report a part of the record to be reviewed on appeal.

OUTCOME: The Court vacated defendant's death sentence and remanded the case to the state supreme court with directions to remand to the trial court level.
Do you have the topic?

dead sentence and due process
Narrow to your specific court using the filters on the left side of the search results.
Now do the same thing in...
1. Do you have the citation?

Find a Document by citation: (e.g., 98 S.Ct 2733)

430 u.s.349
2. Do you know the names of the plaintiff and defendant?

Type in the names in the “Find document by title” section.
Gardner v. Florida
430 U.S. 349, 97 S.Ct. 1197, 51 L.Ed.2d 393

March 22, 1977 (Approx. 17 pages)

430 U.S. 349, 97 S.Ct. 1197, 51 L.Ed.2d 393

Briefs and Other Related Documents

Supreme Court of the United States
Daniel Wilbur GARDNER, Petitioner,
V.
State of FLORIDA.

No. 74-6593.
Argued Nov. 30, 1976.
Decided March 22, 1977.

Petitioner was found guilty in Citrus County Circuit Court, John W. Booth, J., of murder in first degree and sentenced to death and he appealed. The Supreme Court of Florida, 313 So.2d 675, affirmed judgment and sentence and certiorari was granted. The Supreme Court, Mr. Justice Stevens, held that petitioner was denied due process of law when death sentence was imposed, at least in part, on basis of confidential information, which was in presentment report but which was not disclosed to petitioner or his counsel, so that petitioner had no opportunity to deny or explain, and that, since it was possible that full disclosure, followed by explanation or argument by defense counsel, would have caused trial judge to accept jury’s advisory verdict that life sentence be imposed, death sentence would be vacated and case remanded.
Do you have the topic?  

death sentence and due process of law
Don’t click on “Search” yet!

You need to pick what type of court you’re looking for
...137, 179, 2 L.Ed. 60 (1803)FN 29 but the Court soon thereafter rejected conclusively any notion that only a legislative idea or even incarceration imposed on named individuals fell within the prohibition. Mr. Chief Justice Marshall firmly settled the ma


...675, affirmed judgment and sentence and certiorari was granted. The Supreme Court, Mr. Justice Stevens, held that petition denied due process of law when death sentence was imposed, at least in part, on basis of confidential information, which was not...

...or argument by defense counsel, would have caused trial judge to accept jury's advisory verdict that life sentence be imposed and... would be vacated and case remanded. Vacated and remanded. The Chief Justice concurred in the judgment. Mr. Ju and...

...Capriciousness. (Formerly 110k1208.1(4.1) 110k1208.1(4) 110k1208(1) It is of vital importance to defendant and to comm