

DL 301 — Procurement Law & FAR Fundamentals

The rulebook course. You will learn why the federal acquisition regulation exists, what it protects, how it structures a competition, and how the private-side gates of a pursuit meet the public-side governance of the law.

Course number: DL 301 · **Credit hours:** 3 · **Term:** 14 weeks, one 75-minute session per week (plus independent reading and assignments) · **Audience:** junior undergraduates · **Prerequisites:** DL 102 · **Tier:** upper-division elective (Year 3) · **Texts:** this repository — the doctrine, the literacy maps, and real published solicitations · **Tools:** none required beyond a web browser for SAM.gov and the FAR’s public text. Stack-agnostic by design (doctrine/08).

Doctrine spine

doctrine/04 (gates and governance — the public side) is the spine, supported by doctrine/01 (contract vs. grant) and doctrine/02 (the solicitation as a legal instrument). The course teaches the *shape* of the law — what the FAR is, what it protects, how competition is structured — at concept altitude. It does not require memorizing clause numbers; it requires being able to find, read, and reason about the rules as they appear in a real solicitation.

Where this course sits in the program

This is the **governance** elective. DL 101 and DL 102 taught the market and the documents; this course teaches the law the documents carry. It pairs naturally with DL 302 (Proposal Production & Compliance) — the compliance matrix is the place the law and the proposal meet — and it deepens the public-side lens of the doctrine for any student heading toward a policy or contracts career.

Ladder: DL 102. Recommended pairing: DL 302. Not a prerequisite for the capstone, but students who take it arrive with a sharper compliance eye.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this course, a student can:

- Explain what the FAR is, why it exists, and what it protects — fairness, competition, and the public’s money.
- Describe the acquisition process at a high level: requirements, planning, solicitation, evaluation, award, administration.
- Explain the competition requirement (“full and open”) and the statutory reasons the market is deliberately narrowed (set-asides and small-business programs).

- Find and read the legal content of a real solicitation: the clauses, the certifications, the evaluation commitment.
- Distinguish the acquisition rulebook (the FAR and its supplements) from the assistance rulebook (grants and cooperative agreements under the federal grants framework).
- Explain the consequences of the rules: protests, debarment and suspension, and the procurement-integrity obligations of the people in the process.
- Reason about where private-side gates (a firm's own governance) meet public-side governance (the law) — the two halves of one system.

How the course works

The course reads the law through real documents. Each week pairs a concept with a real, published, *closed* solicitation: you will hunt clauses, read certifications, and trace how the agency committed itself to a fair process. The midterm is a clause-and-compliance hunt in class; the final is a written law-and-compliance review of a real solicitation.

Weekly schedule

Week	Theme	In-session (75 min)	Reading (doctrine / literacy)	Assignment due next week
1	Why a rulebook	Public money, public trust. What the rules protect: fairness, competition, accountability.	doctrine/04	One-page “why the rulebook exists” in your own words
2	The FAR: what it is	The Federal Acquisition Regulation as the rulebook of buying. Its parts; its supplements.	literacy/glossary; doctrine/01	A one-page map of the FAR's structure (as far as the parts make sense to you)

Week	Theme	In-session (75 min)	Reading (doctrine / literacy)	Assignment due next week
3	The acquisition process	Requirements → planning → solicitation → evaluation → award → administration. Where the solicitation sits.	doctrine/02	Place a real solicitation on the acquisition-process map
4	Competition and the “full and open” rule	The statutory default: full and open competition. The exceptions that narrow it.	doctrine/01	A one-page brief: what “full and open” means and why set-asides are the designed exception
5	The solicitation as a legal instrument	Sections L and M as the agency’s binding commitments: how you must respond, how you will be judged.	literacy/how-to-read-an-rfp.md	Locate the Section L and Section M language in a real RFP and quote the commitment
6	Clauses and certifications	Section I (clauses) and Section K (certifications). The legal terms a winner lives under.	literacy/how-to-read-an-rfp.md; literacy/glossary	A one-page clause-and-certification hunt in a real RFP

Week	Theme	In-session (75 min)	Reading (doctrine / literacy)	Assignment due next week
7	Midterm	In class: a clause-and-compliance hunt — find, quote, and explain the legal content of a real solicitation.	(review week)	Midterm submission
8	The assistance rulebook	Grants and cooperative agreements: the federal grants framework as the sibling of the FAR.	doctrine/01; literacy/how-to-read-a-nofo.md	A one-page “two rulebooks” comparison table
9	Small-business programs in the law	Set-asides, HUBZone, 8(a), WOSB/VOSB, SBIR/STTR — as statutory market design.	doctrine/01	A one-page brief on one small-business program and its statutory purpose
10	Protests and the bid protest system	When a competitor challenges a decision. GAO and the agencies’ own processes.	doctrine/04	A one-page explainer: what a protest is, who can file, what it pauses
11	Debarment and suspension	The consequence system: who can be excluded and why. Integrity as a market condition.	doctrine/04	A one-page brief on debarment and suspension and what they protect

Week	Theme	In-session (75 min)	Reading (doctrine / literacy)	Assignment due next week
12	Procurement integrity and ethics	FAR Part 3 and the conduct rules of the process: no conflicts, no gifts, no gaming.	doctrine/04	A one-page ethics scenario analysis (a real or realistic case)
13	Private gates meet public law	The firm's gates and the agency's law as one system. Where they reinforce; where they conflict.	doctrine/04; doctrine/08	A one-page reflection: "where my firm's gate and the agency's law disagree, who wins — and why?"
14	Final: law-and-compliance review	A written review of a real solicitation: the legal content, the fairness design, the compliance burden, and the risks.	(review week)	Final submission

Assessment summary

- **Weekly assignments** — 30% (each a concrete artifact: a map, a brief, a hunt).
- **Midterm** — 25% (clause-and-compliance hunt, in class).
- **Final law-and-compliance review** — 30%.
- **Participation and peer review** — 15%.

Rubric per `course/assessments-and-rubric.md`. Accuracy is the priority in this course: the law is not a place for invented facts. If you are not certain of a rule, say so and cite what you found.

The midterm

In class, with a real (published, closed) solicitation you have not seen before, produce in 75 minutes:

1. **The commitment** — quote the evaluation commitment (Section M) and the instruction commitment (Section L).
2. **The clauses** — find three clauses and explain what each obligates a winner to do.
3. **The certifications** — find the certifications in Section K and explain what a responder is asserting.
4. **The fairness design** — how does this solicitation protect fairness, and where is the risk of an unfair process?
5. **The consequence** — what would happen if a responder violated a certification?

The trap being tested: students who write a policy essay about procurement law instead of *reading the law as it actually appears in the document*. The midterm rewards reading, not reciting.

Policies worth stating plainly

- **The doctrine is the course.** Every assignment tests the concept, never a tool. If an assignment ever seems to require knowledge of a specific product or system, that is a bug in the assignment — flag it.
- **Accuracy is the point.** Government facts (clause meanings, program rules) must be stated accurately. When unsure, state it generally rather than inventing specifics.
- **Real documents, safe exercises.** We read real solicitations, but always published, closed ones.
- **Academic integrity.** The law exists to keep the market fair. This course models the same discipline: cite your sources; do not fabricate evidence; be the person the market can trust.

The course in one sentence

By Week 14 you will be able to open any federal solicitation and see the law it carries — the commitments, the clauses, the certifications, and the fairness design — and you will understand why the private discipline of the gate and the public discipline of the law are two halves of the same system.