# Lawyering Skills and Strategies I, Section B4  
**Fall 2015**  
*Professor Ruth Piller*  

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<td><strong>Course Information</strong></td>
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## Course Objectives

This course provides an introduction to the American legal system and the skills lawyers use in day-to-day practice:

- Identifying and analyzing legal issues;
- Conducting legal research; and
- Writing client communications, motions and other litigation-related documents, and simple contracts.

We will employ real-world fact patterns simulating a law firm environment so that students can interview clients, communicate with a supervising attorney orally and in writing through memoranda, communicate with clients via email and in formal client letters, and negotiate and draft short contracts.

## Class Attendance

UHLC attendance policy dictates that you may miss no more than **five** scheduled classes. The Law Center considers mandatory outside-of-class activities (such as Westlaw training or certain speakers) as scheduled classes. On your **sixth** absence, I must refer you to Sondra Tennessee, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, to discuss dismissal from this course. I reserve the right to count you as absent if you 1) are not in the classroom or other specified location at the time class is scheduled to begin, 2) are unprepared for class, or 3) fail to put forth a good faith effort on in-class assignments.

## Office Hours and Contact Information

- **Tuesday** – noon to 2 p.m.
- **Friday** – noon to 2 p.m.
- **Other times/days** by appointment (or if my door is open, just come in).

My office is located in the LSS suite, office 15J, which is in the basement of BLB. If I am not in my office and you need to get in touch with me, please send me an e-mail at repiller@central.uh.edu or text me at (713) 569-0052.

## Ungraded Assignments

Throughout the semester I will assign a number of ungraded assignments. You must complete each ungraded assignment to my satisfaction. If, in my discretion, your work product does not reflect a good-faith effort, I will require you to rewrite the assignment within a prescribed time period. Unless I say otherwise, you must complete all assignments by the beginning of class on the day the assignment is due. I will require you to turn in some assignments using the TWEN Assignment Drop Box. You will not turn in other assignments, but we will discuss them in class instead. Please note that **5%** of your final grade is class preparation and participation, which includes consideration of any ungraded assignment turned in late or not turned in at all.
Your LSS grade will comprise the following components:

- **Open-Research Memo** (60%) – Due by 5 p.m. on Monday, November 2, 2015;
- **Final Examination** (30%) – October 13, 2015; and
- **Class Participation** (10%).

If you are ill or otherwise unable to turn in a graded assignment on time, you must notify me in writing **prior to the assignment’s due date**. If your graded assignment is late and you have not received a prior extension from me, I reserve the right to reduce your grade on the assignment by one grade level for the first hour (or part of the hour) the assignment is late. After the first hour, I will impose one additional grade reduction for each hour the assignment is late. For example, if you turn in your Memo two hours late, and in grading the merits of your Memo I determine your assignment was B-quality work, then your grade on the Memo will be reduced by two grade levels – giving you a C+ on the assignment. **Computer problems, printer problems, and routine illnesses do not constitute emergencies.**

**Curve:**

The Law Center mandates this course be graded on a 2.8 to 3.2 curve. Moreover, additional curve requirements are imposed on all first-year courses. Please see Student Services for complete details. This course is graded anonymously. Your final grade in this course will depend upon your performance on each graded assignment and exam, your class participation, and your satisfactory completion of all ungraded assignments.

**Formatting Guidelines for Ungraded and Graded Assignments**

Except for ICW and Core Grammar for Lawyers exercises (which are completed online and submitted to me electronically), all assignments must conform to the following specifications **(unless the assignment states otherwise):**

1) **Use Times New Roman 12-point type** on white 8½ x 11 paper.
2) **Double space** each assignment; use **one-inch margins** on all sides of every page; and **fully justify text**, aligning text to both the left and right margins of every page.
3) Page numbers should be placed on the **bottom center** of each page, with page numbering beginning on the **second page**. Staple your document in the top left corner.
4) The document must be compatible with Microsoft Word (not WordPerfect) or Adobe Acrobat.
5) Your name or exam number (exam numbers are used for graded assignments only) and section designation must appear on all assignments.

You will also need to conform to all supplemental formatting requirements stated on each individual assignment. Failure to use correct form will result in your losing points on your assignments.
Course Textbooks

The following textbooks are mandatory for this course:

- Christine Coughlin, *A Lawyer Writes: A Practical Guide to Legal Analysis* (2nd ed. 2013);
- Amy E. Sloan, *Basic Legal Research: Tools and Strategies* (6th ed. 2015);
- Tracy L. McGaugh & Christine Hurt, *Interactive Citation Workbook for the Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (15th ed. 2015);
- *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (20th ed. 2015); and


Unless otherwise instructed, please bring your Supplemental Materials Packet to every class. In addition, if readings from Coughlin or Sloan were assigned for class, please bring that textbook. The syllabus will also advise you to bring your laptop to class on several given days for electronic research training. Please note that we will complete a *Core Grammar for Lawyers* online course this semester. Please see your “First Day Assignment” information for details.

TWEN (The West Education Network) Web Course

I will use a course website maintained by The West Education Network (TWEN). You may access TWEN by going to [http://lawschool.westlaw.com/twen/](http://lawschool.westlaw.com/twen/). You will need your Westlaw password to access the website. After you register your Westlaw password, sign on to TWEN and add the webpage for this course to your list of courses. The course webpage is named “Lawyering Skills & Strategies.”

On the “Syllabus” page, I will post a copy of this Course Information sheet, the Syllabus, and any changes to these documents that may occur during the semester. On the “Course Materials” page, I will post classroom lecture materials and PowerPoint presentations. I will also include separate pages for supplemental reading materials and in-class exercises.

You will be held responsible for all material and messages posted by me on TWEN. Please register an email address that you check frequently, because I will send all class related e-mails to whatever e-mail address you register with TWEN.

Legal Writing Center

All UHLC students may obtain free individual tutoring at the Legal Writing Center, located in BLB 14D, next door to the LSS suite. Several outstanding third-year law students staff the Writing Center and can assist you with basic grammar skills, proper English usage, and sentence and paragraph construction. The law students can also answer your questions on legal writing, research, and citation. However, you may not obtain assistance from the Writing Center on any graded writing assignment. To schedule an appointment, e-mail C_LawLegalWritingCenter@central.uh.edu or call 713-743-0759. Walk-ins are also welcome. Additionally, the Center will send you a weekly e-mail containing “Writing Tips of the Week.” You are responsible for the grammar rules discussed in each Writing Tip of the Week.
**Honor Code**

The Honor Code applies to this class. You are responsible for complying with the Honor Code and for knowing its provisions. If you have questions about a certain activity, please ask me.

**Computer Use and Other Disruptions**

In accordance with the Law Center’s computer use policy, I prohibit computer use in class for anything other than completing activities directed by me, taking notes, or accessing class related material. Similarly, to avoid disrupting the class, unless I give you permission, please turn off your cell phone and avoid talking with your colleagues during class. Use of your laptop for any non-class related purpose and/or excessive talking to colleagues will lower your class participation grade.

You will have the opportunity to hear from various speakers during the semester; unless otherwise noted, attendance for those classes is mandatory. If you use your laptop during any of those classes for anything other than note-taking, your class participation grade will be lowered by one level. Moreover, I prefer that if you take notes during the speakers’ presentations, you use old-fashioned paper and pen.