Welcome to law school and the University of Houston Law Center. You will find that this class is a bit different from your other first-year classes. Rather than learning law as you do in your doctrinal classes, in Lawyering Skills and Strategies (“LSS”) you will learn how to use the law as you will when you are a practicing attorney. This results in several benefits to you:

- You will learn skills that make you a better law student;
- You will prepare writing samples necessary for judicial internships and law firm summer clerkship applications; and
- You will learn and hone the research, writing, and oral communication skills that employers demand in your internships and clerkships and throughout your practice. You will find these skill useful whether you choose a litigation- or transaction-based practice, or even if you go into academia.

I look forward to meeting and getting to know each of you. Until then, please complete the following tasks before our first class meeting:

1. Read Otis S. Kerr, *How to Read a Legal Opinion*, 11 The Green Bag 2d 51-63 (2007) and *How to Brief a Case*, available in the Piller Supplemental Reading Packet (Tabs 1 and 2, respectively). You may pick up the Piller Supplemental Reading Packet in the LSS Offices at your convenience.

   I recommend you read these articles early. They are specifically intended to help achieve the first goal, set forth above, and to enable you to streamline the reading required in your other classes, making you better prepared the first day in each of your classes.

2. Read Coughlin, *A Lawyer Writes*, Chapter 1 (pp. 3-13) and Chapter 2 (pp. 15-31). While much of this may seem like mere “background” material to you, it is crucial that you thoroughly understand where law comes from and how much weight you should give it. These concepts are essential to understanding legal analysis in the common-law system and will, like the materials in (1) above, help with other classes.

3. Read Linda H. Edwards, *Legal Writing and Analysis* 23-28 (3d ed. 2011) and the other materials behind Tab 3 of the Piller Supplemental Reading Packet. Before coming to the first class, you should be able to differentiate between primary and secondary authority and between binding and persuasive authority.

   To test your understanding of these concepts, complete Linda H. Edwards’ Exercises 2-4 and 2-5 (Piller Supplemental Reading Packet Tab 3) and the legal-authority exercises in Piller Supplemental Reading Packet Tab 4. Be prepared to discuss these exercises in class.

4. If you need additional assistance as you complete these exercises, consult Sloan, *Researching the Law: Finding What You Need When You Need It*, Chapter 2 (pp. 9-19, especially Figures 2.2 and 2.4).
5. Read Kevin G. Cain, *And Now, the Rest of the Story... About the McDonald’s Coffee Lawsuit*, 45 THE HOUSTON LAWYER 25 (July/August 2007) (Tab 5 in Piller Supplemental Reading Packet). We will discuss the article in class.

6. Please follow the directions below to register for the Core Grammar for Lawyers (“CGL”) Program in which all LSS classes will participate this year. There is no charge to students for this service. To register, please do the following:

- Complete the form and be sure to select "Texas" for your state and "University of Houston Law Center" for your school.
- On the payment page, enter your code in the Access Code field. No credit card is required.
- Verify the purchase and continue on to create your Core Grammar for Lawyers account.
- You will be able to start using CGL immediately.
- Your class code is 315-209-2362.

Once your subscription is activated, you are ready to begin.

i. Open the Pre-Test by clicking on the link on the home page, called your “Bookshelf.”

ii. Set aside 45-90 minutes to answer the Pre-Test questions to the best of your ability. (It took me about 45 minutes; the program suggests you allow 90 minutes. Complete the Pre-Test, regardless of how long it takes.) Please do not consult outside resources, as it is a closed-book exam.

iii. Please be aware that THIS EXAM IS NOT FOR A GRADE. In fact, you will find that, while it tests you on some basic grammar rules, it will also test you on many rules unique to the legal field that will be new to you. If you come across something that is completely new to you, simply skip over. The purpose of the Pre-Test is to enable you to skip lessons later in the semester about the grammar that you already know.

Please do not be discouraged if you encounter grammar questions that seem completely foreign to you. Consider them an introduction to the legal writing style all lawyers employ. You, too, will be familiar with these rules before you complete this class. This grammar program, as annoying as it may seem, is important to your achieving the second and third goals set forth above – preparing professional writing samples for judicial internship and summer clerkship applications, and perfecting the legal writing skills employers will expect you to know throughout your practice.

One more thing: Your assignment for my first class is sizeable. Please be assured that most assignments for this class will not be as daunting.

See you in class Tuesday, August 25!

*Professor Piller*