

**LAWYERING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES I (SECTION B2)**  
**FALL 2017**

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**Course Objectives**

*Lawyering Skills and Strategies I* will focus on an introduction to the American legal system and the underlying skills and strategies lawyers must possess to succeed within it. By working through problems inside and outside the classroom, you will learn to identify legal issues; locate and assess the governing law; analyze legal issues within the context of particular fact patterns; cite to the governing law; and write clear and concise documents that communicate your legal analysis. And in all matters, you will be expected to uphold the ethical and professional standards of a lawyer-in-training.

**Required Course Materials**

You are required to purchase the following textbooks for use in this course:

- *A Lawyer Writes: A Practical Guide to Legal Analysis* (2d ed. 2013), written by Christine Coughlin, Joan Malmud Rocklin, & Sandy Patrick [“Coughlin”];
- *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (20th ed. 2015), published by the Harvard Law Review Association [“Bluebook”];
- *Interactive Citation Workbook for The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (2017 ed.), written by Tracy McGaugh Norton & Christine Hurt [“ICW”]; and
- *The Greenbook: Texas Rules of Form* (13th ed. 2015), published by the Texas Law Review Association [“Greenbook”].

You also may wish to purchase *Researching the Law: Finding What You Need When You Need It* (2d ed. 2017), written by Amy E. Sloan [“Sloan”], for additional help with legal research strategies.

**Attendance**

This course is scheduled to meet in Bates Law Building Room 213, on Tuesdays from 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and on Thursdays from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Please note that certain class periods may be added and/or combined. Any changes to the regularly scheduled meeting time and location for the course will be reflected on the syllabus and/or announced via e-mail.

*Attendance is mandatory.* Attendance will be taken during each class session and individual conference. It is your obligation to ensure that you are counted as present. In accordance with the University of Houston Law Center’s attendance policy, you may miss no more than *five* scheduled class sessions during the semester. Thus, on your sixth absence, I will send you to Dean Tennessee (the Associate Dean for Student Services) where the matter of dismissal will be

taken under advisement. I reserve the right to count you as absent if (1) you are not in the classroom ten minutes after the class or conference has begun, or (2) you fail to consult with a tutor in the Legal Writing Center after I have instructed you to do so.

### **Conferences**

You must attend at least one conference with me this semester. Individual conferences will be held during the week of November 13 to discuss the Graded Open Memorandum.

If you need to reschedule your conference, please contact me before the originally scheduled conference time. Otherwise, your failure to appear for the scheduled conference will be counted as an absence.

### **Office Hours**

If you have any questions about the course, please ask me. I will have office hours on Mondays from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., on Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., and by appointment. My office is located in the Lawyering Skills and Strategies Suite in Room 15-H. Any changes to my regularly scheduled office hours will be announced via e-mail and posted on my office door.

### **Class Preparedness and Participation**

You are expected to complete the assigned readings before coming to class and all assigned ungraded exercises by the deadline in the instructions for that exercise. I reserve the right to lower your course grade up to a maximum of two grade levels if you habitually fail to prepare for class, participate actively in class, or perform satisfactorily on quizzes. *I also reserve the right to lower your course grade up to a maximum of two grade levels if you fail to submit all of your ungraded exercises before the last day of classes on November 27, 2017.*

### **Computer Use and Other Disruptions**

The use of laptop computers in class is a privilege, not a right. You may be asked to close your laptops and give your full attention during many class sessions. Please have pen and paper available for notetaking during these times. The use of a computer or any other communication device in class for activities or purposes unrelated to the course causes a significant distraction for other students and severely disrupts the ability of students to participate fully in class. Therefore, improper use of a computer during class (including, but not limited to, composing, sending, or reading e-mails; instant messaging; searching or browsing the Internet; playing games; and/or viewing movies) may result in dismissal from the class session and/or a reduction in your final grade.

This policy is consistent with University of Houston Law Center's computer use policy, which you can read here <http://www.law.uh.edu/jd/current/handbook.pdf>.

Unless you are instructed otherwise, please turn off cell phones and similar devices.

### **Course Recording Policy**

*Students are not permitted to record a class themselves by any means without my prior express authorization* because I do not want students to feel inhibited in asking questions or in participating in in-class exercises. If a student receives my express authorization to record a

class, the student is not allowed to distribute such a recording to any other person or use the recording for any purpose other than the student's own education without my express authorization.

### **Legal Writing Center**

You may obtain free individual tutoring at the Legal Writing Center ("Center"). The Center is located adjacent to the Lawyering Skills and Strategies Suite in Room 14D-BLB. Several outstanding third-year law students staff the Center. They are able to help you with legal writing, legal research, and citation issues as well as style and usage questions. You may schedule an appointment with a tutor by e-mailing [C\\_LawLegalWritingCenter@central.uh.edu](mailto:C_LawLegalWritingCenter@central.uh.edu) or calling (713) 743-0759. Walk-ins are also welcome. At my discretion, I may require you to visit the Center for additional assistance. If I require you to visit the Center and you fail to do so, that failure will be counted as an absence.

### **Online Legal Research Training**

Online legal research is an important component of this course. You will be given passwords for LexisNexis and Westlaw, which you will need to register after the first class.

### **Course Webpage**

We will be using a course webpage maintained by The West Education Network (TWEN). The URL is <http://lawschool.westlaw.com/twen/> and you need your Westlaw password to access the webpage. After you register your Westlaw password, sign on to TWEN and add this course webpage. The course webpage is named Lawyering Skills and Strategies Section B2.

On the TWEN account, you will find a copy of the course description and syllabus, additional readings, handouts, and exercises covered in class. You will also use the "Drop Box" to submit your graded assignments and some of your ungraded assignments. You will use the "Sign-Up Sheets" page to schedule an individual conference with me this semester.

Please check the course webpage regularly because I will assume that you are aware of the material I post on it.

### **Quizzes, Ungraded Exercises, and ICW Problems**

#### **Quizzes**

From time to time during the semester and without prior warning, I may give quizzes to test your comprehension of the material. These quizzes may be in the form of written questions during class or an interactive quiz accessed on the computer. The habitual failure to perform satisfactorily on such quizzes may result in a lowering of your course grade by two grade levels.

#### **Ungraded Exercises**

Throughout the semester, I will assign a number of ungraded exercises that are critical to your learning the material and which you must complete to my satisfaction. Any work that in my discretion does not reflect a good faith effort will have to be redone or rewritten to an acceptable standard within a prescribed time. Be sure to retain a copy of your ungraded exercises. The failure to submit all ungraded exercises by the last day of classes this semester may result in the lowering of your course grade by two grade levels.

## **ICW Problems**

To practice your citation skills and to prepare for the Legal Citation Exam, you are strongly encouraged to complete the Interactive Citation Workstation (ICW) Problems as recommended in the syllabus. You will access ICW through Lexis Advance. Be sure you do the *Bluebook* exercises, not the ALWD exercises. You may e-mail your results to me. If you experience any technical difficulties accessing or completing the ICW Problems, please contact me or LexisNexis for assistance.

## **Graded Assignments**

The following assignments will be graded and constitute the baseline for your grade for this course, subject to adjustments identified in this Course Information Sheet:

- **Graded E-mail (15%)**
- **Legal Citation Quiz (20%)**
- **Graded Open Memorandum (55%)**
- **Professionalism (ungraded assignments and class participation) (10%)**

One of the skills you need to master is how to budget and manage your time. If your Graded E-mail is more than fifteen minutes late, I may deduct 1 point for each hour (or part of the hour) that the assignment is late. If your Graded Open Memorandum is more than fifteen minutes late, I may deduct 2.5 points for each hour (or part of the hour) that the assignment is late. The graded assignments are a required part of this course. If you fail to complete any one of the graded assignments you will receive an “F” in this course. If you receive an “F” in *Lawyering Skills and Strategies I*, you will be required to repeat the course.

If you are unable to complete a graded assignment by the due date, you must contact me before the due date to seek an extension. I will consider extensions for true emergencies only. Be advised: computer problems, including printer problems, do not constitute true emergencies.

Please note that the Law Center uses an anonymous-grading system to ensure fairness in grading. You will be assigned an exam number this semester to use instead of your name on the Citation Quiz, E-mail, and Memoranda. Your name should not appear anywhere in your Citation Quiz, E-mail, or Memoranda, and you should not share your exam number with me before the release of final grades.

## **Mandatory Curve**

This course is subject to a mandatory grading curve. The average grade in each section must be between 2.8 and 3.2.

## **Mandatory First Year Grade Distribution**

In addition to the mandatory grading curve, this course is also subject to the mandatory First Year Grade Distribution:

A	0–10%
A-	5–15%

B+	15–25%
B	25–35%
B-	15–25%
C+	5–15%
C (or below)	0–10%

### **Formatting Requirements**

All exercises and assignments you submit must conform to these specifications:

- Use Times New Roman, 12-point type, on white letter-size (8 ½” x 11”) paper.
- Double space each assignment.
- Use one-inch margins on all sides.
- Place page numbers in the bottom center of each page, starting on the second page.
- Adhere to all other requirements stated in the instruction sheet.

### **Honor Code**

The Honor Code applies to this class. Students are responsible for knowing its provisions and complying with them.

The UHLC Honor Code is found at <http://www.law.uh.edu/student/HONOR-CODE-AND-PROCEDURES.pdf?> Questions regarding how the Honor Code’s provisions apply to specific activities may be directed to me.

### **If You Need Help**

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help students who are having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to the demands of a professional program, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS ([www.uh.edu/caps](http://www.uh.edu/caps)) by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or someone you know is in crisis. No appointment is necessary for the “Let's Talk” program, a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus. [http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets\\_talk.html](http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html)