

Torts

DRAFT - Course Syllabus

Fall 2022

Prof. Meredith J. Duncan (she/her/hers)

MWTh 1:00 to 2:20 pm

This document is a syllabus, not a contract. Therefore, it is subject to change. Any changes will be announced by me in class, posted on the [course website](#) or blackboard page, or distributed via email to the entire class.

I. Required Course Materials

The required text for this course is TORTS: A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH, MEREDITH J. DUNCAN, RONALD TURNER, AND RORY BAHADUR, 3d edition (West Academic Publishing 2018).

II. Instructor Information

- Office phone number: 713-743-2019
- Email: mduncan@uh.edu or mjduncan@central.uh.edu.
- Office hours: TBD
- Administrative Assistant: Harold Bradford, hpbradfo@central.uh.edu.
- Law Center Office: 216 BLB

I. Accommodating Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (the “ADA”) requires that the University of Houston make reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities as defined within the meaning of the ADA. Students who need assistance under the ADA guidelines should contact Student Services or me to discuss such consideration.

II. Teaching Objectives and Philosophy

A complete statement of my teaching philosophy is available [here](#).

III. Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- understand and identify overarching tort law principles, theories, and policies;
- identify and consider ethical and professional questions raised by the course materials;
- have knowledge and understanding of substantive tort law;

- understand, identify, and articulate policy arguments commonly used in tort law;
- articulate and express a well-informed opinion regarding torts-related issues; and
- develop skills in legal analysis, reasoning, research; problem-solving; and written and oral communication related to tort law.

IV. Professionalism

A. COVID-19 Considerations and Precautions

Wearing masks, practicing safe hygiene, and being fully vaccinated are the best ways of reducing COVID infections and transmissions. When attending class, the University and I strongly encourage you (whether vaccinated or not) to *wear a mask and socially distance* as much as it is possible to do so in the classroom.

In choosing to attend class, the [University of Houston guidelines](#) provide that your presence at each class session means that:

- you have completed a daily self-assessment of your health and exposure to the virus;
- you are NOT exhibiting any [Coronavirus Symptoms](#);
- you have NOT tested positive for COVID-19; and
- you have NOT knowingly been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or who is suspected or presumed to have COVID-19.

If you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, do not come to campus. Please see [COVID-19 Diagnosis/Symptoms Protocols](#) for what to do if you experience symptoms and [Potential Exposure to Coronavirus](#) for what to do if you have potentially been exposed to COVID-19.

B. Class Preparation

All students are to read the entire assignment in preparation for each class meeting and participate in class discussions. I will call on students at random, although I will typically announce a three-student panel at the beginning of each class. If you are unprepared when I call on you, you will be marked absent for the day. The second time you are unprepared, your final grade for the course will be lowered by 1/3 (*e.g.*, a B becomes a B-). Any student who is unprepared for more than two days during the semester may be dropped from the course.

C. Chosen Names and Preferred Pronouns

I want to address each of you in a manner that corresponds to your identity. My usual practice is to address students by their surnames (*e.g.*, Ms. Nguyen, Mr. Perez). I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Your

chosen names and preferred pronouns will be respected in our classroom. Please feel free to reach out to me at any time if you have any concerns about how your classmates or I address you.

D. Tardiness

I respect your time and education by doing my best to start and end our class meetings promptly. Doing so requires that you be logged onto Zoom and ready to begin at the time (that is, before) this class is scheduled to start. Please be prompt, *as you will be counted absent if you are late.*

E. Baseball Caps

Please remove your baseball caps during our class meetings.

VI. Important Dates – TBD

VI. Grading

A. Final Course Grade

Your final course grade will be determined by a midterm examination worth 20% and a final examination worth 80%. Both the midterm and the final will **likely be closed-book** and comprised of a combination of essay and multiple-choice questions.

B. Extra Credit

There will be opportunities to earn extra credit in this course. Details will be provided throughout the semester.

VII. Class Tutors

There will be four student tutors assigned to this course.

Each tutor will keep regularly scheduled office hours and are available to students in this class as a resource. More detailed information about their office hours will be provided at the beginning of the semester and posted on the course webpage.

VIII. Attendance Requirements

Any student missing more than eight (8) classes will be dropped from the course. There are no excused absences, so use your absences wisely.

IX. Diversity, Inclusion, and Wellness

My classroom is an inclusive learning space where each student will be treated with respect and dignity and where everyone is provided the opportunity to participate, contribute, and succeed. In this course, all students are welcome regardless of socio-economic status, age, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, national origin, veteran's status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, political affiliation, marital status, or other diverse identities that one may bring to class. Our class is richer for this diversity.

Inclusive learning spaces facilitate the innovation and creative thought that enhance student success. I encourage you to speak up and share your views, but also understand that you are doing so in a learning environment in which we are all expected to engage respectfully regarding the dignity of all others.

X. Honor Code

The UHLC [Honor Code](#) applies to all aspects of this course. You are responsible for knowing all Honor Code provisions and for complying with them. Feel free to ask me if you have any questions regarding how the Honor Code's provisions apply to specific activities or situations related to this course.

XI. Counseling and Psychological Services

[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 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.

The Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program ("TLAP") also supports law students dealing with stress, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and other mental health problems. You can reach TLAP at any time at 1-800-343-8527. [TLAP's website](#) includes a page with links to sources about mental health that may be of interest to law students.

XII. Anti-Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policies

UHLC and the University of Houston are committed to maintaining and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from discrimination and sexual misconduct. If you have experienced discrimination or sexual misconduct, a confidential reporting process is available to you. For more information, please refer to the University System's [Anti-Discrimination Policy](#) and [Sexual Misconduct Policy SAM](#). Under the Sexual Misconduct Policy, *faculty and other University employees are required to report any information received regarding sexual misconduct as defined in the policy to the University*. Due to this reporting requirement, it is important for you to understand that *I am not a confidential resource*. The reporting obligations under the Sexual Misconduct Policy extend to alleged

conduct by University employees and students as well.

XIII. Reading Assignments

The reading assignments for this semester will be posted on the course Blackboard page. I plan for us to cover one assignment per class period. However, there will inevitably be days where it will take us more or less than one class period to cover an assignment. I will do my best to keep the class abreast of instances where I think we will not reach or complete the next day's assignment. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to check with a classmate to learn whether we completed the entire assignment on the day you missed. *It is your responsibility to keep track of what assignment number we are on throughout the semester.*