

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Lawyering Skills and Strategies I

Professor Lauren Simpson
Sections E-1 & E-2 • Fall 2023
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I. Welcome!

Welcome to the University of Houston Law Center (“UHLC”) and to our Lawyering Skills and Strategies I class (“LSS I”)! This **Course Description** (i) explains how LSS I will operate and (ii) contains resources to help you navigate LSS I and law school. It is very detailed, but this level of detail ensures a user-friendly course that operates smoothly. I intend for this Course Description to operate as “one stop shopping” for you throughout the semester.

Our **Syllabus** is contained in a separate document. It provides a detailed course schedule.

Please read both this Course Description and the Syllabus early and thoroughly. Many of your questions will be answered in them; what questions remain I’m happy to answer by email before classes begin.

I look forward to getting to know each of you this upcoming semester! Again, welcome to UHLC, and Go Coogs!

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II. Student Well-Being and Class Community

Your well-being matters to your professors. We want to ensure that you feel welcome, appreciated, supported, and heard. So I’ll intentionally incorporate practices into our course to promote student well-being and to create a sense of community.

- Studies show that giving students a say in their education promotes their well-being. Accordingly,
 - I encourage students to leave any feedback they have for my LSS classes at the end of a teaching week (Friday through Sunday) through a standing, anonymous survey in Microsoft Forms, which you have access to through UH Office365.¹ I’ll provide the link to this survey in each class’s Information Sheet. I’ll carefully consider student suggestions, incorporating those that meet my pedagogic goals and will benefit the whole class, and I’ll explain if I decline any suggestion.
 - Two class sessions will be in “Choose Your Own Adventure!” format, for which each student will select one of several topics to study asynchronously.
 - If any of my deadlines presents major difficulties for the whole class due to another academic obligation, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work out a solution.
- Studies correlate student well-being with exposure to nature—even if virtual or momentary. Coincidentally, my passion outside of teaching LSS is educating about pollinators and the wildlife gardens supporting them, as well as photographing them.² So in our LSS class,
 - I’ll present a short “Nature Moment” in one class session each week.

¹ Because this Course Description is publicly accessible, I won’t give the survey link here, but it will appear within the “Welcome Center” module of our Canvas web course (available when the web course opens; please see [Section VI\(A\)](#), below).

² I allow my garden and wildlife photos in [this drop box](#), which I update periodically, to be used for personal or educational use—so please enjoy them! My photos are licensed for non-commercial use, without adaptation, and with attribution (attribution: “Lauren Simpson, creator of St. Julian’s Crossing Wildlife Habitat”) under [Creative Commons version 4.0 Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives licensing](#).

- I'll include pretty nature photos in most of our course materials.
- Here are some more ways we'll help maintain a vibrant class community:
 - Our Canvas web course has a "Welcome Center" module, for you to get to know your professor and course basics.
 - You'll collaborate in small groups in our class sessions and on at least one ungraded project out of class, allowing you to get to know your colleagues better.
 - You'll occasionally be asked to journal for me, not only to confirm your understanding of LSS topics, but also so that I can answer your questions and concerns one on one.
- Here are some ways we'll try making LSS more user-friendly, given how full part-time students' schedules already are:
 - I'll try to minimize course emails because email traffic is already high. Instead, I'll give announcements through Canvas and at the start of each class session.
 - I'll repeat important course information in multiple places, and sometimes in multiple formats, so that you may more easily find and use it. Any redundancy in our course materials is intentional and meant to make your life easier.³
 - I'll follow a clear, consistent naming convention and organizational structure for materials in our Canvas web course, making finding things as easy as possible.
 - Likewise, I'll create a detailed Information Sheet for each class, explaining (i) the objectives for that class, (ii) everything you'll need to prepare for it, and (iii) any homework after it. I'll share each Information Sheet at least a week before its class, to give you enough time to prepare. Except for textbook readings, I put all class preparation in a separate Information Sheet to stay flexible, in case our class needs to evolve with time, based on your feedback or my assessment.

Helpful UH Resources:

- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#)
- [Cougars in Recovery](#)
- [Cougar Cupboard](#)
- [CoogsCARE](#) (student-assistance resources), with helpful links to numerous student support services, including, e.g., [mental-health resources](#) and [mental-health trainings](#) (please also see [Section XIII](#), below)
- [COVID-19 Resources and Information](#)
- [Student Health Center & Campus Pharmacy](#)
- [UH Wellness](#)

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³ As just one example, I organize course materials by class session: each class as its own module on the Canvas "Modules" page. However, because multiple classes may cover the same topic, I also maintain a "Materials by Topic" Canvas module, linking to any class modules to date in which we've covered that topic.

III. Learning Objectives

Our fall LSS I course will focus on an introduction to the American legal system and the underlying skills and strategies that lawyers must possess to succeed within it. By working through fact-specific problems both inside and outside the classroom, you'll learn to identify legal issues; to locate and to assess the governing law; to communicate with the client; to analyze legal issues within the context of particular fact patterns; to cite to the governing law; and to write clear and concise documents that reflect that legal analysis or that address the client's transactional needs.

More specifically, these 13 objectives apply to our LSS course in both semesters, unless otherwise indicated:

1. Understanding of sources, hierarchy, and precedential value of laws
2. Ability to distinguish different types of legal rules, to dissect legal rules into their basic components, and to synthesize a unified rule of law from disparate sources
3. Proficiency in identifying issues applicable to the client's case
4. Effective execution of on-line legal research and selection of authority to address issues in the client's case
5. Proficiency in understanding and applying case precedent to the client's case
6. Proficiency in understanding and applying enacted law to the client's case
7. Ability to translate legal research and analysis into an objective writing that is organized effectively, conveys all relevant and required substance clearly and concisely, and omits extraneous matters
8. Ability to translate legal research and analysis into a persuasive writing that is organized effectively; conveys all relevant and required substance clearly, concisely, and strategically; and omits extraneous matters [Objective 8 applies only during the spring 2024 semester.]
9. Exposure to the considerations underlying contract negotiation and drafting to address the client's needs effectively
10. Introduction to the general principles for legal citation, proficiency in *Bluebook* citation for cases and statutes, and proficiency in *Greenbook* citation for cases [*Greenbook* citation applies only during the spring 2024 semester.]
11. Proficiency in using correct grammar and punctuation regardless of the document or communication drafted
12. Awareness of how the topics discussed and assignments given in the course fit into the practice of law
13. Awareness of ethical and professional issues in practice

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IV. Course Materials

Here are the texts required for our LSS I course:

- *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (21st edition [2020], or latest edition)
- Christina Coughlin, John Malmud, & Sandy Patrick, *A Lawyer Writes: A Practical Guide to Legal Analysis* (3d ed. 2018)⁴
- Tina L. Stark, *Drafting Contracts: How & Why Lawyers Do What They Do* (2d ed.)
- Kamela Bridges & Wayne Scheiss, *Writing for Litigation* (1st ed. 2011)⁵

Special notes on texts:

- **Please note the specified edition for each textbook.** The Bridges & Scheiss text is not the most current edition, to save students money.
- We'll use all of the above texts in the spring semester, as well, **except** for Stark. **Therefore, you'll need to retain all of your textbooks (except for Stark) for the spring.** However, if you're considering taking an upper-level contract-drafting class or participating in the [Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic](#), or if you simply want a terrific contract-drafting resource, then I recommend keeping the Stark textbook.
- *The Bluebook* is also available in online e-format [here](#), if you prefer it.

Helpful free writing resources:

- Free [grammar exercises by the Purdue Online Writing Lab](#)
- The free writing assistant [Grammarly](#)

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V. Office Hours and Contact Information

My office hours are on **Mondays and Thursdays from 4:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.** Students may meet with me

- in person (in my office: Room 431D) or
- virtually (on Zoom: please see [Section VI\(C\)](#), below).

Any changes to my regularly scheduled office hours are reflected in the Syllabus or will be announced by email or by Canvas and in-class announcement.

⁴ Although the third edition is our required text and is superior, the Syllabus includes the second-edition pages in case a student has that earlier version instead.

⁵ This isn't the most current edition: using this older edition reduces the cost.

I'm also happy to meet with students by phone or Zoom outside my office hours, by appointment. Please email me to schedule an appointment.

My office phone is 713-743-2159, but I prefer contact through my office email, which is ljsimpso@central.uh.edu. I'll share my cell phone number on the first day of class; please don't distribute it beyond our LSS I class. **Please contact me by email, texting only for time-sensitive matters or emergencies.**

I'm available to answer student questions from Monday through Friday, and on most Saturdays, through about 8:00 p.m. (and after our class sessions). However, I ask that students not contact me on Sundays, which is my Sabbath. If you email on a Sunday, I won't read your email until Monday morning, so please plan accordingly. Finally, I'll endeavor to respond to student emails within 24 hours after receiving them; I expect the same professional courtesy from my students.

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VI. Course Format and Technology

We'll hold our LSS I classes **in person** in fall 2023. Please see [Section VII](#), below, for location and times. My two LSS I sections will attend class sessions together this fall so that neither has class beyond 8:45 p.m.

I won't simply lecture for 75 minutes. Rather, I'll divide that time into presentations, collaborative exercises, ungraded quizzes and polls, discussions and brain-storming sessions, and other activities because studies show that active participation keeps students engaged and helps them commit learning to long-term memory, where deep thinking takes place. You'll also usually view one or more "flipped" (asynchronous) lectures before class sessions because it allows me to split up lectures into shorter bites, which studies show are more easily absorbed.⁶ Relatedly, our lectures generally won't exceed about 25 consecutive minutes.

I'll record all class sessions and post a link to the recording in that class's module on our Canvas web course. All class recordings are closed-captioned, to ensure universal accessibility for all students. These recordings will be deleted shortly after the semester ends. There's a chance that your contributions to class discussion, whether voluntary or while on call, may be included in the recording. Your continued registration in this class indicates your acquiescence to any such incidental recording for the purposes described above.

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A. LSS I Web Course

I have a single web course that both LSS I sections share in the fall. This LSS I web course will be hosted by UH's **Canvas** learning management system. Please follow these steps to access our LSS I web course:

1. Log into [Access UH](#).
2. Under "University Services," click on "Canvas."

⁶ I won't shorten a class session when you watch a flipped lecture in advance because the flipped lectures help you achieve the ABA-mandated, out-of-class, weekly study time of 3 hours for each of our 1.5-hour synchronous class sessions (for 6 hours total each week), when averaged out over the semester.

3. Click on our LSS I course, which is named “Simpson LSS I—E-1 & E-2—F2023.”⁷
4. Our Canvas web course should be available at least a week before our first class. You’ll automatically be enrolled in it.

These UH-provided resources are available to you with Canvas:

- [Basic information for new Canvas and CougarNet users](#)
- [Canvas Student Guide \(TOC\)](#)
- [Student Help for Canvas](#)

You’ll find a short virtual tour of our LSS I Canvas web course linked in the Canvas “Welcome Center” module, which you must view before our first class.

Because you won’t have access to our Canvas web course until shortly before our first class, **I’ll provide you with all materials for the first week of LSS I (Class 1 and Class 2) at least a month before the semester begins, emailing you links to OneDrive folders containing these materials.** If you want to start preparing for LSS I before then, the Syllabus contains all text readings for the entire semester, which you may read at any time.

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B. Course E-Mail

You must use your official UH email address for all school-related communications with me, for security reasons.

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C. Zoom Meeting Room (Conferences, Meetings, and Office Hours)

We’ll use a single Zoom meeting room for

- my regular office hours (to be held by Zoom or in person, as the student chooses),
- scheduled student meetings outside office hours (to be held only by Zoom), and
- mandatory student conferences (to be held only by Zoom).

Because this Course Description is publicly accessible, the Zoom meeting link and passcode aren’t contained in it, but will instead be available in the Canvas “Welcome Center” module. Please don’t share our Zoom meeting room link or passcode outside our class.

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⁷ If you don’t see this nickname, then the original Canvas course name is “LAW5314 13119 MAIN – Lawyering Skills and Strategies I.”

D. Course Microsoft Teams Site

A Microsoft Teams site will be available for certain LSS projects: “Simpson—LSS 2023-24—E-1 & E-2.” You’ll be able to share documents, to meet, and to collaborate with class colleagues on this platform outside of our usual class sessions.

You can access Teams through UH Office365, which you can learn more about here:

- [Logging in to Office365](#)
- [Setting up Office365 apps and email](#)

For those unfamiliar with Teams, here are some helpful resources:

- [Getting the Teams App](#)
- [Using Teams](#)
- [Joining a Teams meeting](#)
- [Scheduling a Teams meeting](#)

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E. Use of Generative Artificial Intelligent Tools⁸

Law students and legal practitioners should understand the uses, limits, and ethics of using Large Language Model generative artificial intelligence tools (GAI tools), whether open-source or otherwise.⁹ We’ll discuss this topic in Class 5, before you receive your first writing assignment.

While current GAI tools can be helpful for some purposes, you need to understand their limits and pitfalls (discussed in Class 5) for both law school and practice, including these:

- Act as if the GAI tool’s answer is wrong unless you know otherwise or can verify it in a reliable source. Why? Because GAI tools are Large Language Models trained on data that they lack the ability to assess for truth, bias, correctness, completeness, or quality. Consequently, some GAI-tool output may appear correct when it’s not. Similarly, GAI tools are known to “hallucinate” facts or to fabricate credible-looking sources, complete with accurately formatted citations to non-existent material. So don’t accept their results without independent thought and verification. In Class 5, we’ll discuss some techniques for increasing GAI-tools’ reliability. Nonetheless, you’re entirely responsible for any errors or omissions resulting from your use of GAI tools.

⁸ Adapted primarily from the GAI policy of Professor Drew Loewe (St. Edwards University), with some content adapted from Professor Liza Long (College of Western Idaho)

⁹ Examples of current GAI tools include, e.g., [Open AI’s ChatGPT](#), [Anthrop/c’s Claude2](#), [Google’s Bard](#), [Bing Chat](#), [Perplexity](#), [Meta’s LLaMA2](#), [Quillbot’s Co-Writer](#), [WordTune Write and Paraphrase](#), [Casetext’s CoCounsel](#), and Google Docs “Help me Write” feature. GAI tools will continue to appear, so this list isn’t exclusive. Tools that I **don’t** consider GAI tools include Grammarly and grammar- and spell-checkers internal to Microsoft Word and Google Docs. If you’re unsure whether a writing tool you wish to use is considered a GAI tool for purposes of our LSS I GAI-tool policy, please check with me before using it.

- Relatedly, open-source GAI tools don't currently have access to firewalled legal-research databases, including Westlaw and Lexis.¹⁰ In their current state, these GAI tools will thus sometimes make up legal authorities in response to queries asking for legal authority. That said, the future may hold an open-source GAI tool that does access these legal databases, through licensing or purchase. But for now, that's not the case.
- Imprecise prompts lead to low-quality results. There's a learning curve to producing better prompts—in part because 1Ls know little about the law, and knowing an area of law can help focus your queries about it, but also because learning the techniques to generate more reliable responses takes time. We'll work some in Class 5 on prompt engineering.
- Some GAI tools aren't connected to the Internet, which means they have limited access to more recent Internet data. For example, ChatGPT currently has limited access to data beyond 2021, the year its data collection ceased. Why does this matter? Because a jurisdiction's body of law evolves regularly and sometimes very quickly, so that the passage of any time can make a difference. Therefore, be mindful that any law ChatGPT-3.5 provides you might be incomplete or wrong because the database it's drawn from isn't current.
- GAI tools may not keep confidential the information you input when using them and may present other security or privacy risks. So confidential client or other information can't be part of your prompts.¹¹
- Legal employers and UHLC professors will have different policies on GAI tools' use. For example, while some firms might allow certain GAI tools' use in limited circumstances, we're learning that others are prohibiting the use of GAI tools entirely—and that some are using GAI analyzers to ensure compliance. As a further example, my GAI-tool policy may differ from that of other professors. Therefore, whether in law school or at work, you should always ask about the policy on GAI-tool use and then strictly follow that policy. And you also need to learn during law school how to write effectively without these tools, in the event your professor or employer restricts or prohibits their use. Relatedly, you won't be able to use these tools on the Bar Exam.
- In LSS, and as a 1L, you're learning for the first time how to execute legal research, analysis, and writing. You learn more deeply at this stage when you struggle with these skill areas, working through them, rather than having something do them for you. For this reason, I place significant restrictions on the use of GAI tools for various work in LSS (please see the LSS I GAI-tool policy, below).
- Don't surrender your voice and style. While GAI tools might provide useful suggestions in their current state, only you can fully develop your own writing voice and unique style. Don't cede that personal development to a mere tool.
- While GAI tools may help you with things like the mechanics of writing, substantive brainstorming, and organizing your thoughts, only you can “think like a lawyer.” Inspired analytical thought continues to be the purview of human practitioners, not GAI tools.

¹⁰ Some GAI tools that aren't open source may have access to legal databases, such as Casetext's CoCounsel, which Thompson Reuters (Westlaw's parent company) recently acquired when it purchased Casetext. Lexis is also currently developing a GAI tool.

¹¹ Very advanced users may currently be able to run Large Language Models entirely on their own machines, in which case this confidentiality limitation may be greatly reduced. But this ability is presently extremely limited, so assume your prompts can be seen by third parties.

You don't need to use a GAI tool to succeed in my class, and I'll never require their use. However, for those wishing to use any GAI tool in our LSS I class, the following policies apply:¹²

1. Graded Quizzes (CR[e]AC and Citation)

You **may not** use GAI tools to any extent on the two LSS I Graded Quizzes. A breach of this policy will result in a score of 0 for the relevant quiz.

2. Citation Exercises

You **may not** use GAI tools on the ungraded Citation Exercises. Why? Because the best way to learn citation is to tackle the ungraded practice questions yourself, so that the rules and their application are embedded in your long-term memory. Moreover, you'll be locked out of GAI tools for the "Graded Quiz: Citation."

3. Journals

You **may not** use GAI tools on your ungraded Journal submissions. Why? Because the Journals are a form of self-assessment, and I want you alone, on your own, to think through the challenges you faced, the ways you propose to address them, and your future goals.

4. In-Class Exercises

You **may not** use GAI tools on in-class exercises—whether preparing for them before class or carrying them out in class—unless I expressly allow otherwise (e.g., during Class 5). Why? Because these exercises exist to help you learn through doing, to embed that learning in your long-term memory, which happens better when you work through the exercise process yourself (to prepare) or with your classmates (in class).

5. Writing Assignments (Default Rules)

What follows are the default rules for using GAI tools on graded and ungraded writing assignments in LSS I. **Each writing assignment** will advise whether it adopts only these default rules, or whether it adapts them in any way. So, please pay close attention to the instructions for each writing assignment.

- Default rules applicable to all writing assignments, whether graded or ungraded.

While working on any aspect of a writing assignment, you may use GAI tools for **only** these two things, one of which has specific parameters for its use:

1. *Use 1: Non-citation proofreading.* You may use a GAI tool to help with non-citation proofreading, which means grammar, punctuation, typos, and spelling errors, and which **excludes** legal citation.

Grammar and punctuation are challenging for virtually everyone. So, practice honing these skills in law school, before you enter practice. If you really want to learn these rules, then I **strongly suggest** you do more than simply ask the tool to make these corrections. Instead, if your chosen GAI tool can do this, then consider asking it to list any grammar or punctuation errors that it finds, with suggested corrections, and to explain the rule underlying each

¹² Because GAI tools are fast-emerging and constantly evolving, I may revise these policies at any time.

suggested correction. Not only will this help you learn the rules, but it will also allow you to decide whether to incorporate the suggested changes. We'll practice creating prompts for this use in Class 5.

2. *Use 2: Prose-related editing at the paragraph and sentence level.* **Sharing no more than one paragraph of your writing at a time**, you may use a GPT tool to help with prose-related editing at the paragraph and sentence level. Examples include strength and clarity of prose, word choice, verbosity, transitional language and thesis sentences, avoiding excessive passive voice, and internal flow within the sentence or paragraph.

Because I want you to use the GAI tool to learn how to improve your prose, you **may not** simply ask the tool to rewrite all or part of a sentence or paragraph to improve it. Instead, **you must also ask the GAI tool to explain its suggested editing revisions within that sentence or paragraph—following up on those explanations in your chat with the GAI tool, as needed, until you feel you understand them and their underlying concepts.** This will help you comprehend these editing concepts, evaluate your prose critically, and decide whether to incorporate any suggested changes. If your selected GAI tool can't currently provide such explanations (e.g., Quillbot's Co-Writer, WordTune's Write and Paraphrase, and Google Docs "Help me Write" feature), then you **may not** use it for this purpose. We'll practice creating prompts for this use in Class 5.

If you use any GAI tool in either of these two ways on a writing assignment, then in a separate page at the document's end, you must provide a **very brief** reflection (\approx 1-3 paragraphs) that

- discloses what GAI tool you used and for what purpose(s) you used it,
- explains how useful the GAI tool was for the purpose(s),
- explains what steps you took to ensure your final work product was competent, and
- certifies that you followed the required parameters for Use 2, if you employed it.

You may not use GAI tools for anything else when working on a writing assignment. So for example—and without limitation—you can't use a GAI tool for legal research, or ask it to suggest which authorities to use; for brainstorming issues, counter-arguments, or analysis; for proofreading or generating legal citations; or for outlining or organizing your writing content.

Why do I restrict GAI-tool use on writing assignments during this first LSS semester? Because the research, analysis, and writing process needs to be embedded in your long-term memory, which won't happen if you don't repeatedly work through that process yourself. Additionally, I want my graded and ungraded writing assignments to assess how students research, analyze, and write, not how well they can create prompts or use GAI tools.

Submitting any writing assignment that violates any of my rules concerning GAI-tool use, whether these default rules or those specified in a particular writing assignment, will incur the following penalty, as relevant:

- *Graded writing assignment:* a score of 0 for the assignment
- *Ungraded writing assignment:* the two-point deduction for not having turned in the assignment

- Additional default rule applicable to graded writing assignments.

On graded writing assignments, you may not use any programming language to make API calls to a Large Language Model.

- Your responsibility.

Like any other technology, GAI tools must be used responsibly. So you're responsible for ensuring that any GAI-tool use avoids copyright infringement and plagiarism; stays within the assignment instructions; and meets the assignment requirements. You're likewise responsible for verifying the responses GAI tools provide you, as well as editing your final writing product to ensure it meets the standards of, and content taught in, our LSS I class.

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VII. Schedule for Class Sessions

I hold LSS I class sessions on Mondays and Thursdays from 7:30 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. in Room 102B. Any scheduling changes are reflected in the Syllabus or will be announced by Canvas and in-class announcement, by email, or by both. You'll also attend two mandatory conferences with me during the semester, one before each graded writing assignment is due.

I may count you as absent if you're more than ten minutes late to a class session or if you leave more than ten minutes early.

If an illness prevents your attending a specific class session in person, but you'd still like to attend that session, please reach out to me in advance to discuss the possibility of attending remotely.

Likewise, if an important, unavoidable conflict prevents your attending a specific class session in person, but you'd still like to attend that session, please reach out to me beforehand to discuss the possibility of attending remotely. A request to attend remotely for an unavoidable conflict will be decided on a case-by-case basis and represents the rare exception, so that you have full advantage of in-person group work to the greatest extent possible.

Failure to attend a mandatory conference will also result in an absence and, at my discretion, may also result in a one-point deduction from your Professionalism and Ungraded Assessments score.

Likewise, failure to complete a "Choose Your Own Adventure!" assignment's submission or confirmation will result in a one-point deduction from your Professionalism and Ungraded Assessments score, but may also, at my discretion, result in an absence because that's how I confirm that you completed that asynchronous module.

Under UHLC's attendance policy, you may miss no more than 20% of scheduled class hours during the semester. If you exceed this percentage, I must notify the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, which could result in your dismissal from the course.

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VIII. Grading and Graded Assessments

A. Curve and Grade Distribution

UHLC sets the average of grades in our LSS I class between 3.2 and 3.4. A mandatory grade distribution also applies to this class. Because my LSS I sections will be taught together in the fall, they will also be graded and curved together.

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B. Graded Assessments

The following five assessments will be graded and constitute the baseline for your LSS I course grade. The maximum raw score for each assignment is shown:

1. **Graded Legal Memo assignment—45 points**
2. **Graded Contract assignment—25 points**
3. **Graded Quiz: Basic CR[e]AC Understanding (closed materials)—10 points**
4. **Graded Quiz: Citation (open materials)—10 points**
5. **Professionalism and Ungraded Assessments—10 points.** This component includes
 - keeping scheduled appointments or conferences with me (unless prior notice of cancellation is given)—this deduction is in addition to any absence incurred for missing that appointment or conference;
 - being prepared for and participating meaningfully in class sessions and exercises, as well as in any collaborative work assigned outside class with your student “law firm”;
 - completing ungraded assessments (as explained in [Section IX\(E\)](#), below);
 - fulfilling anything required for a graded assessment’s mandatory conference, such as a conference agenda, authorities list, outline, or draft document;
 - responding timely to my communications with you individually; and
 - treating classmates and me respectfully, professionally, and with kindness (please see [Section XII](#), below).

Your Graded Legal Memo and Graded Contract assignments are due at **11:59:59 p.m. on the due date listed in the Syllabus**. I provide a 15-minute grace period for graded writing assignments to be turned in without penalty, which translates to 12:14:59 a.m. on the day after the due date listed in the Syllabus. One of the skills you need to master in law school is how to budget and to manage your time. Accordingly, if your Graded Legal Memo assignment or Graded Contract assignment is turned in after 12:14:59 a.m. on the day after the due date listed in

the Syllabus (i.e., after the 15-minute grace period expires) without my prior permission, I may deduct the following points for each hour, or part of an hour, that the document is late:¹³

- *Graded Legal Memo assignment*: 4 points
- *Graded Contract assignment*: 3 points

Student grades for these assignments are often very close, so the loss of even a few points can make a significant difference in your curved grade. Therefore, it's virtually always better to turn in a document on time, even if imperfect, than to turn it in late and slightly more polished. **If your Graded Legal Memo assignment or Graded Contract assignment is submitted after 6:00 a.m. on the day after the due date listed in the Syllabus without my prior permission, I'll not accept it, and your LSS I course grade will be an "F."**

If you're unable to turn in your Graded Legal Memo or Graded Contract assignments on time, **you must notify me in writing prior to the due date** to seek an extension. **I'll consider extensions for true emergencies only.**

Because UHLC uses an anonymous-grading system to ensure fairness in grading, your name may not appear on any of your graded assessments. Instead, **you'll be assigned a *different exam number* each semester. You're responsible for obtaining your fall exam number *before* the Graded Legal Memo assignment is due.**¹⁴ Fall exam numbers may be obtained on the [UHLC Students web page](#), under "Exams" (the "What is my exam number?" link).

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IX. Ungraded Assessments

A. Writing Assignments

During the semester, I'll assign several ungraded writing assignments, on parts of which you'll work collaboratively in class. The Syllabus indicates the time and date by which each ungraded writing assignment is due. I require a good-faith effort in completing ungraded writing assignments. This means that I'm not evaluating for one "correct" legal conclusion, or requiring perfect organization, style, and editing in your writing. The purpose of these assignments is simply to assess your understanding and execution of what we've learned, so that I may give you the feedback you need to strengthen your writing. So instead of perfection, my baseline requirement is just that you reasonably attempt to apply what we've learned, considering the assignment's purpose and the timeframe given to write it. Of course, the more effort you put into your writing and the more you strive for perfection, the more helpful feedback I can give you, and the better your writing will become. In the very unusual situation that I determine a student's work product doesn't meet the good-faith standard, the student must redo it to avoid the penalty mentioned in [Section IX\(E\)](#), below.

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¹³ For example, a Graded Legal Memo assignment that is turned in without prior permission after 12:14:59 a.m., but at or before 1:14:59 a.m., on the day after the listed due date is subject to a 4-point deduction. A Graded Legal Memo assignment that is turned in on or after 1:15 a.m. and at or before 2:14:59 a.m. is subject to an 8-point deduction: 4 points for the hour spanning from 12:15 a.m. to 1:14:59 a.m., and 4 more points for the hour starting at 1:15 a.m.

¹⁴ Please **don't wait** until the last minute to look up your fall exam number: you may experience technical issues, and the Office of Student Affairs may not then be open to help you. Instead, please obtain your fall exam number early, to avoid any issues.

B. Citation Exercises

To help you practice your *Bluebook* citation skills, I'll assign certain citation exercises throughout the semester. Preparatory readings will come from *The Bluebook*, [The Bluebook Uncovered](#) (a tremendously helpful, free, online resource), course materials, or a combination of these.

You'll have five citation exercises this semester. You'll access the exercises and submit your answers through the Canvas "Assignments" page.

Citation exercises are due **by the end of the day** on the due date indicated in the Syllabus. Please complete them in a timely fashion: I use students' answers as a diagnostic tool, to focus our class sessions on citation concepts that are difficult for most students.

After the due date, I'll share each exercise's answers on Canvas. I won't correct individual student answers; instead, please compare the exercise answers with your own, reaching out to the Legal Writing Fellows or me with questions. You may contact the Legal writing Fellows at c_law_legal_writing_center@Central.UH.EDU.

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C. Self-Assessment by Journaling

Self-assessment (reflection) is an important skill for developing professionally. In reflecting, you'll think about a professional experience you had, examine it and your performance in it, and evaluate not just the experience, but what you learned from it and what plan of action is needed to achieve your goals better in similar experiences in the future. During law school, you should follow a similar reflective process after assignments, tests, and projects.

I'll periodically require you to write a short self-assessment in the form of a journal entry, in which you'll reflect on a completed LSS I assignment. These will not only provide an opportunity for you to reflect, but will also allow me to gauge your understanding of the subject covered, to receive your questions, and to stay connected with you. Only you and I will see your journal entry.

You'll access and submit your journal assignments through the Canvas "Assignments" page. Journal entries are generally due at **6:00 p.m.** on the date indicated in the Syllabus (unless otherwise noted), so as not to interfere with your other professor's class that same day.

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D. Ungraded Quizzes

I may occasionally require you to take a short, ungraded quiz on an LSS I topic—either (1) during a class session or (2) as class preparation—to assess your understanding of the subjects covered. These quizzes will allow me to see if you're understanding what we're then studying, which includes whether I'm explaining concepts sufficiently.

Asynchronous quizzes assigned as class preparation are due at **6:00 p.m.** on the date for that class on the Syllabus. The quiz instructions will advise how to access and to submit the quiz.

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E. Expectations, Extensions, and Deductions for Ungraded Assessments

I'm happy to grant reasonable deadline extensions requested in advance for any ungraded assessment. In contrast, I reserve the right not to give feedback on any ungraded assessment turned in late without my prior permission, which can put you at a significant disadvantage for some assessments.

In any event, you must turn in all ungraded assessments (to a good-faith standard, if applicable) before the Graded Contract assignment is due, or I'll deduct the following points from your Professionalism and Ungraded Assessment score for each unsubmitted assessment:

- *Ungraded writing assignments*: 2 points
- *Citation exercises*: 1 point
- *Journal (self-assessment) assignments*: 1 point
- *Asynchronous quizzes assigned as class preparation*: 1 point
- *"Choose Your Own Adventure!" assignments*: 1 point

This submission policy exists to encourage completing the ungraded assessments: students learn and retain information better when they do periodic "formative assessments" like these, which hone the very skills they need to succeed in school and practice.

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X. Accessibility and Accommodations

Reasonable Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids. The University of Houston is committed to providing an academic environment and educational programs that are accessible for its students. Any student with a disability who is experiencing barriers to learning, assessment, or participation is encouraged to contact the [the Justin Dart Jr. Student Accessibility Center](#) (Dart Center) to learn more about academic accommodations and support that may be available to them. Students seeking academic accommodations will need to register with the Dart Center as soon as possible to ensure timely implementation of approved accommodations. Please contact the Dart Center by visiting the website: <https://uh.edu/accessibility/> calling 713-743-5400, or emailing jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU.

UHLC support services. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on a disability (including any chronic or temporary medical or mental-health condition), please feel free to reach out to me so that we may discuss options. If you require any support services, you may contact Ms. Samantha Ary, the Academic Records Coordinator in the Office of Student Affairs. Ms. Ary can be reached at sary@central.uh.edu. Requests for accommodation that involve graded assignments must be directed to Ms. Ary and should be made as soon as possible to allow adequate time to document and to process the request.

Religious and cultural observances. If you observe religious or cultural holidays that will coincide with class sessions or conferences, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we may make alternative arrangements.

Course materials. I'll caption class-related recordings to enhance accessibility for all students. I'll strive to make all LSS I documents' formatting fully accessible, to the best of my ability.

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XI. Respect in Addressing Students

I want to address each of you in a manner that corresponds to and respects your name and identity. Please feel free to reach out to me at any time if you want to make me aware of your pronouns or your chosen name or if you have concerns about how I address you, pronounce your name, etc.

You may call me “Professor Simpson” or “Prof. S.” My pronouns are she | her | hers.

I use third-person plural pronouns (they, them) for generic references to individuals in my course materials. (Learn more about this choice [here](#).) This is my preference for my own writing and is intentional. Students are not wed to that convention; the choice is theirs.

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XII. Professionalism and Respect in Our Class Community

I’m committed to ensuring a learning space in which each student is treated with respect and dignity, and where everyone may participate, contribute, and succeed. Civility and kindness are paramount in my class—for myself and my students.

And so is professionalism. In the words of the [Texas Lawyers Creed](#) (TLC), attorneys “should always adhere to the highest principles of professionalism.” Professionalism comprises attributes like civility, courtesy, respect, candor, fairness, and ethical behavior. As a lawyer-in-training in my LSS I class, you must act professionally towards your fellow students and me. I hold myself to the same standard.

All students are welcome in our LSS I course regardless of socio-economic status, age, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, national origin, veteran’s status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and other identities that we each bring to class. I encourage you to speak up and to share your views. When you do, please remember that you’re doing so in a learning environment in which we’re all expected to engage respectfully and with regard to the dignity of our classmates, including “disagree[ing] without being disagreeable” (TLC).

If you feel like your class performance is impacted in any way by your experiences outside of class, please reach out to me. I want to be a resource for you. If you feel more comfortable speaking with someone besides me, the [Office of Student Affairs](#) is an excellent resource.

UH Resources:

- [UH Anti-Discrimination Policy](#)
- [Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center](#)
- [Student Advocacy and Support](#) (umbrella page), linking to various resources, including, e.g., [Center for Student Empowerment](#) and [Student Advocacy](#)
- [Cougars in Recovery](#)
- [Counseling, Psychological Services, and Student Well-Being](#) (see [Section XIII](#), below)
- [UH Veteran Services](#)

- [Cougar Cupboard](#)
- [CoogsCARE](#) (student-assistance resources), with helpful links to numerous student support services, including, e.g., [mental-health resources](#) and [mental-health trainings](#) (please also see [Section XIII](#), below)
- [DACA: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Student Health Center & Campus Pharmacy](#)
- [UH Wellness](#)

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XIII. Mental-Health Resources

UH has a number of resources to support students’ mental health and overall wellness, including [CoogsCARE](#) and the UH Go App. UH [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) offers 24/7 mental health support for all students, addressing various concerns like stress, college adjustment, and sadness. CAPS provides individual and couples counseling, group therapy, workshops., and connections to other support services on and off-campus. For assistance visit <https://www.uh.edu/caps/>, call 713-743-5454, or visit a [“Let’s Talk”](#) location in-person or virtually. The Let’s Talk program provides daily, informal, confidential consultations with CAPS therapists, where no appointment or paperwork is needed.

The [Student Health Center](#) offers a Psychiatry Clinic for enrolled UH students. Call 713-743-5149 during clinic hours, which are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., to schedule an appointment.

The A.D. Bruce Religion Center offers spiritual support and a variety of programs centered on well-being.

Need support now? If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call CAPS crisis support 24/7 at 713-743-5454 or contact the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988, or chat 988lifeline.org.

Finally, the Texas Lawyers’ Assistance Program (“TLAP”) supports law students who are 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 are of interest to law students: <https://www.tlaphelps.org/law-students>.

UH Resources:

- [Cougars in Recovery](#)
- [Cougar Cupboard](#)
- [CoogsCARE](#) (student-assistance resources), with helpful links to numerous student support services, including, e.g., [mental-health resources](#) and [mental-health trainings](#)
- [Student Health Center & Campus Pharmacy](#)

- [UH Wellness](#)

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XIV. Anti-Discrimination, Title IX, and Sexual Misconduct Policies

UHLC and the University are committed to maintaining and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment in which students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from discrimination and sexual misconduct. If you have experienced an incident of 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 webpage](#), [Anti-Discrimination Policy](#), [Sexual Misconduct Policy webpage](#), and [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#).

Per the UHS Sexual Misconduct Policy, **your instructor is a “responsible employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and state law and must report incidents of sexual misconduct** (sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual intimidation, intimate partner violence, or stalking) about which they become aware to the Title IX office. Please know there are places on campus where you can make a report in confidence. You can find more information about resources on the Title IX website at <https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/title-ix-sexual-misconduct/resources/>.

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XV. Honor Code

The [UHLC Honor Code](#) applies to all aspects of our LSS I class. **You're responsible for knowing all Honor Code provisions and for complying with the Honor Code.** Please ask me if you have any questions regarding how the Honor Code's provisions apply to specific activities or situations related to my course. **It's an Honor Code violation to review the graded assignments distributed to, or written by, any of my LSS students from prior years.**

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XVI. Additional Provost-required Syllabus Information

COVID-19 Protocols. Students are encouraged to visit the University's [COVID-19 website](#) for University protocols and a link to the CDC COVID-19 website.

Recording of Class. Students may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures without advanced, written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the [Justin Dart Jr. Student Accessibility Center](#). If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use the instructor's recordings for their own studying and notetaking. The instructor's recordings are not authorized to be shared with **anyone** without the prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action. **[Note to students: I'll record all class sessions for my LSS I students' use only.]**

Syllabus Changes. Please note that the instructor may need to make modifications to the course syllabus and may do so at any time. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through Canvas and in-class announcement, by UH email, or both.

Security Escorts and Cougar Ride. The University of Houston Police Department (UHPD) continually works with the University community to make the campus a safe place to learn, work, and live. The security-escort service is designed for the community members who have safety concerns and would like to have a Security Officer walk with them, for their safety, as they make their way across campus. Based on availability, either a UHPD Security Officer or Police Officer will escort students, faculty, and staff to locations beginning and ending on campus. If you feel that you need a Security Officer to walk with you for your safety, please call 713-743-3333. Arrangements may be made for special needs.

Parking and Transportation Services also offers a late-night, on-demand shuttle service called “Cougar Ride,” which provides rides to and from all on-campus shuttle stops, as well as the MD Anderson Library, Cougar Village/Moody Towers, and the UH Technology Bridge. Rides can be requested through the UH Go app. Days and hours of operation can be found at <https://uh.edu/af-university-services/parking/cougar-ride/>.

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Again, welcome to UHLC! I look forward to working with each of you during the 2023-24 scholastic year.



[American Lady butterfly](#) (*Vanessa virginiensis*), nectaring on [Lanceleaf Coreopsis](#) (*Coreopsis lanceolata*) in our home wildlife-habitat gardens, spring 2019