

University of Houston Law Center
Syllabus and Course Information
Fall 2025

LAW 5314: LAWYERING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES I
Professor Maleaha Brown

Course Meeting Times and Place

This is an in-person course. Our usual classroom is LAW222. Class will meet **Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.** unless otherwise indicated.

Professor Contact Information

Professor Maleaha Brown

Pronouns: she/her

Office Telephone: (713) 743-3323

Email: mbrown38@central.uh.edu

Office location: 341S

Office Hours

I will be holding regular office hours. All office hours will be open sessions that will include as many students as wish to attend.

Course Description

This three-unit course is designed to prepare students for the real-world demands placed upon attorneys by:

- (1) sensitizing students early on to ethical and professionalism issues;
- (2) promoting broad-based skills training, including analytical, research and writing skills; and
- (3) providing concentrated instruction in the basics of legal methods, legal reasoning, and legal process.

The course teaches students how to conduct legal research, analyze statutes and court cases, and draft objective formal memoranda assessing the merits of a hypothetical case based on the research they have conducted. Class sessions focus on identification and articulation of legal issues, rule synthesis, use of precedent to make predictions about case outcomes, organization of a written analysis, paragraph unity and coherence, precise and concise writing style, consistency of tone, and awareness of audience. Students also receive focused instruction on professionalism and the legal profession.

Course Learning Objectives

The broad course objective is to provide students with a firm grounding in the research, analytical, writing, and professional skills needed to succeed as a lawyer. By the time students finish LSS I, they should be able to:

- analyze the law and how it affects your client's case;
- organize a written legal analysis in a manner that meets the expectations of your reader;
- use citation conventions;
- develop and apply effective methods for improving your writing style;
- meet the expectations others will have of you as a professional attorney;
- demonstrate interpersonal and self-development skills as part of your professional identity.

Course Materials

Required course materials

This course requires the following texts and materials:

- Christine Coughlin, Joan Malmud, and Sandy Patrick, *A Lawyer Writes* (4th ed. 2024) (ISBN: 9781531020699)
- *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (22nd ed. 2025) (ISBN: 9798218574574)
- Microsoft Office 365. All written assignments must be submitted in Word format. Written assignments submitted in PDF, Pages, Google Docs, or any other alternative formats will not be accepted.

Canvas Information

Please access "LAW5314 17838 - Lawyering Skills and Strategies I" on our Learning Management System (Canvas).

Assignments for this course are submitted through Canvas. I also use Canvas to deliver feedback on assignments and to send class announcements throughout the semester. Please go to your Canvas Account, select Notifications, and be sure that you have checked Notify Me Right Away for Announcements and Conversations.

Course Requirements

Class preparation

I expect students to review the assigned materials thoroughly before the corresponding class session. You will learn more if you come to class prepared. Class preparation includes not only reading the assigned materials, but taking notes on the materials and synthesizing those notes before class so you are prepared to engage in discussion on each topic. Class discussion will commence with the assumption that everyone is thoroughly familiar with the assigned materials. We will spend class time practicing the lessons that you learned in the assigned materials.

Coming to class prepared is also part of your responsibility to our community of learners. Your lack of preparation can impact other students' experience.

A student's grade in this class may be raised or lowered by one third of a grade (e.g., from a B to a B+, or from a B to a B-) based on the student's preparedness for class, engagement with class, and overall professionalism. In determining whether to raise or lower a student's grade, I will consider, among other things, the student's daily knowledge of the required course readings, the student's ability to answer questions based on the course readings, the student's willingness to contribute to class discussions and the quality of those contributions, the student's timely completion of non-graded exercises (e.g., practice exams, quizzes, and other evaluative methods), the student's participation in any opportunities for discussion outside of class such as office hours and on-line discussion forums, and the student's timely attendance or lack of timely attendance. I will also consider the respect and attention that a student gives to class lectures, class discussions, and comments made by other classmates. I will also consider whether a student's comments and questions advance the learning experience in the classroom.

Student grades will not be adjusted upwards solely because a student often volunteers to speak in class: the volume of participation in itself is only one factor I will consider. Grades will also not be adjusted upwards based solely on a student's good attendance and timely arrival to class, or because a student completes the required readings for a course, or because a student participates in class discussions. Students are expected to arrive on time and prepared to all classes, and to participate in class discussions, and will not be rewarded for meeting those basic expectations. I may lower a student's grade, however, for poor attendance, for repeatedly arriving late to class, or for repeatedly leaving class early. Grades may also be lowered for students who play video games; use personal email, twitter or Facebook or surf the internet during class; or engage in other disruptive behavior.

Using laptops in class

Please bring your laptop to class each session. We will be accessing electronic resources for class exercises.

Please remember that non-class-related internet use on your laptops during our live classes is unprofessional and detrimental to other students' and your own learning. Please do not access non-course materials during class. Please silence all cell phones, tablets, and other electronic devices.

Attendance

Regular class attendance is essential for your success in this course, and I will take attendance. Missing more than 4 classes will subject you to dismissal from the class. Please contact me as soon as possible to alert me to any issues you are facing that affect your attendance.

I reserve the right count students as absent if they leave class early, leave class repeatedly during instruction, come to class unprepared, or engage in inappropriate conduct, such as distracting other students during class.

Grading Criteria and Evaluation

Overview of Grade Components

The LSS course is a five-unit course: three units in the Fall semester and two units in the Spring semester. Your successful completion of the Fall semester depends upon your completion of all assignments. Assignments are organized into the following three

categories: (1) Graded Assignments; (2) Class Preparation Assignments; and (3) Pass/Fail Assignments.

The Assignments are listed on the Assignment List below, along with their due dates. All assignments must be submitted on Canvas, unless otherwise instructed. Assignments that are submitted late will be assessed a late penalty (see below).

Graded Assignments

The final grade for the course will be based on scaling each graded assignment. The graded assignments this semester are:

- Class Preparation Assignments (10%);
- Citation Assessment (10%);
- Research Assessment (15%);
- Graded Legal Correspondence (25%); and
- Graded Legal Memorandum (40%).

Class Preparation Assignments

As part of the course, you will need to complete several Class Preparation Assignments. Class Preparation Assignments will be assigned a select number of points per assignment. Class Preparation Assignments must be turned in timely and with a good-faith effort to receive any points. Failure to turn in a Class Preparation Assignment timely will result in an automatic zero on the assignment. Class Preparation Assignments and point allocations may be assigned and changed throughout the semester.

Pass/Fail Assignments

In addition to the Graded Assignments and Class Preparation Assignments, you will need to complete one Pass/Fail Assignment, the Ungraded Legal Memorandum. You cannot receive course credit for LSS I unless you complete and receive a "Pass" on the Ungraded Legal Memorandum. To receive a "Pass," you must put forth a good faith effort and fulfill the basic criteria set for the assignment.

You should also be aware that Pass/Fail Assignments carry penalties for lateness, which are set forth below. If a Pass/Fail Assignment is turned in, but not the quality of work is not "passing," the assignment will incur late penalties until the student revises the product to reach a passing level.

Late Penalties

All assignments must be submitted in Canvas on time. Deadlines and late penalties are strictly enforced. It is your responsibility to turn in assignments on time and for ensuring that the submission is complete. Email copies are not acceptable except as agreed by me in advance. All written assignments must be in Microsoft Word format; late penalties apply if an assignment is submitted in a different form.

Assignments are late immediately after the deadline. Any portion of a 24-hour day counts as a full day for assessing late penalties. For example, an assignment due "by 5:00 p.m." is one day late at 5:01 p.m. through 5:00 p.m. the next day.

I may grant deadline extensions for true emergencies, such as serious personal illness. Unless it is impossible to do so, you must ask for an extension before the due date.

The Late Penalties are as follows:

- Late **Class Preparation Assignments** will not be accepted. All Class Preparation Assignments must be turned in timely, or the assignment may receive a score of 0.
- All **Pass/Fail Assignments** will be assessed at 3-point penalty per day. The penalty will be deducted from the Graded Legal Memorandum.
- **Graded Legal Correspondence and Memorandum:** 10 points per day will be deducted from the assignment.

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 instructor's recordings for their own studying and notetaking. 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.

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 the Honor Code. Please inquire if you have any questions regarding how the Honor Code's provisions apply to specific activities or situations related to this course. Your continuing enrollment in this course is deemed to be a pledge by you under the Honor Code to comply with the Honor Code in relation to this course and to comply with the instructions in the course syllabus.

AI-Generated Text and Work Product

General

Generative artificial intelligence is a form of machine learning that creates new and original output based on the data it has been trained on or has access to, employing algorithms to generate content in response to prompts. Examples of the technology include what are known as generative "large language models" (LLMs). Two well-known LLM implementations are ChatGPT and Claude. LLM output can include text, images, music, code, and more. This syllabus policy covers the textual output of generative LLMs (AI-Generated Text)—which can include computer code or programs and human-language content. Because AI-Generated Text can often mimic human intelligence, it could potentially be used as a substitute for a student's own work product. Such use is potentially problematic to the extent that it becomes a substitute for internalized student understanding of the material or creates a dependency on AI-Generated Text, which may be strictly prohibited in settings that include the bar examination.

Prohibition

Subject to the exceptions immediately below, your continuing enrollment in this course constitutes your pledge not to generate or to use any AI-Generated Text—whether from yourself or others—in relation to any assessment in this course. The term "assessment" means any graded or ungraded work product for this course that is submitted to the instructor, presented in a class session, or used in an oral or written graded assessment for this course.

Exceptions

The following AI-Generated Text uses are exceptions to the preceding prohibition. The exceptions' intent is to allow the generation and use of AI-Generated Text for specific, narrowly defined activities related to this course.

- You may generate and use AI-Generated Text for study supplements to aid with general understanding of course content. This could take different forms that include creating an outline that summarizes the course content, generation of diagrams and flow charts, "gamification" of course content, or flash cards for study.
- You may use AI-Generated Text for the purpose of language translation.
- You may use AI-Generated Text when given explicit written permission on specific assignments.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources

The University of Houston 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 uh.edu/caps, call 713-743-5454, or visit a Let's Talk location in-person or virtually. Let's Talk are daily, informal confidential consultations with CAPS therapists where no appointment or paperwork is needed.

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 the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988, or chat 988lifeline.org.

Title IX/Sexual Misconduct

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/>.

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 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.

Women and Gender Resource Center (WGRC)

The mission of the WGRC is to advance the University of Houston and promote the success of all students, faculty, and staff through educating, empowering, and supporting the UH community. The WGRC suite is open to you. Stop by the office for a study space, to take a break, grab a snack, or check out one of the WGRC programs or resources. Stop by Student Center South room B12 (Basement floor near Starbucks and down the hall from Creation Station) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Assignments and Course Outline

Please consult the course syllabus that I will provide on Canvas prior to the first day of class for reading assignments and assessment deadlines. Please complete all reading assignments before coming to class.

Depending on the needs of the class, this syllabus may change as the semester progresses. I will notify you of any changes to the syllabus in writing, by email, using your UH email address. Please check it regularly.