

# U.S. Legal Skills | Fall 2025

Professor Katherine Brem

**About Me.** I'm a first-generation college and law school graduate and Big Law refugee who specialized in oil and gas, general commercial, and catastrophic personal injury defense litigation. For 16 years, I've taught Lawyering Skills and Strategies, Evidence, Federal Pretrial Drafting, Transactional Drafting, Legal Methods, and this course, U.S. Legal Skills. I research and write about the intersection of legal rhetoric, evidence, procedure, substantive law, and introductory U.S. legal concepts for novice students and foreign-trained attorneys - especially those trained in the civil law tradition.

Fun Fact: I have twin 25-year-old daughters, I'm an avid OrangeTheory enthusiast, I have what my family charitably describes as "eclectic" music tastes, and I can never get enough coffee. Seriously. Drop by my office anytime for an espresso. You'll find me in Room 341M in the third-floor faculty suite.

I respond to every email ([kbrem@uh.edu](mailto:kbrem@uh.edu)) and can usually be reached on Teams between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. (713.743.5945) Monday through Friday. I will hold office hours by appointment. If you prefer to meet virtually, just let me know in advance and I will send a Teams link.

**Course Objectives.** U.S. Legal Skills is a one-week orientation course that prepares foreign-trained lawyers for legal education in the United States. By taking this course, you can expect to master the following course objectives:

1. Understand fundamental legal English terminology.
2. Understand concepts of professionalism distinctive to the study and practice of law in the United States.
3. Understand the sources, hierarchy, and precedential value of U.S. law.
4. Distinguish different types of legal rules, dissect legal rules into their essential components, and synthesize a unified rule of law from disparate sources.
5. Understand the procedure and process for interpreting and enforcing laws in the United States.
6. Understand the way principles of law are taught in the United States.
7. Understand study habits and standard tools beneficial to mastering the study of law in the United States.

**Textbooks.** No textbook is required for this course. Instead, I will provide supplemental reading materials free of charge on Canvas, our course management system.

**Assessment.** This course is graded on a pass/fail basis. To pass, you must be prepared for class each day; complete all daily assignments on time, using your best efforts; and achieve a passing grade on a final exam that will assess your mastery of legal terminology; the sources and components of U.S. legal rules; critical reading skills; fundamental legal analysis; and principles of professionalism.

**Honor Code.** The UHLC Honor Code will apply to each assignment. This means that you may NOT work together on any assignments for this class unless I instruct otherwise. You may not plagiarize another's work. You may not share your work with another student. For more information about the UHLC Honor Code, please consult the code.

**Using Generative Artificial Intelligence.** As technology develops to address issues of confidentiality, more and more lawyers will turn to generative artificial intelligence ("gen-AI") to improve efficacy and efficiency. Though we may discuss the use of gen-AI in this course, I ask that you not use gen-AI to complete any course assignments, as this will adversely impact the educational value of this course to you.

**Attendance | Class Administration.** This class will meet in person. Be prepared to discuss the lecture material that I assign for each class. I will call on you at random. If you are unprepared for class, please email me before class to let me know.

**Inclusion.** I want to address each of you in a manner that corresponds to your identity. Feel free to contact me anytime if you want to inform me of your chosen name or preferred pronouns or if you have concerns about how your classmates or I address you.

**The Fine Print. Academic Adjustments | Auxiliary Aids.** The University of Houston is committed to providing an academic environment and educational programs that are accessible to 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 to learn more about academic accommodations and support that may be available to them. Students seeking academic accommodations must register with the Dart Center as soon as possible to ensure the timely implementation of approved accommodations. Please get in touch with the Dart Center by visiting [this website](#), calling (713) 743-5400, or emailing [jdcenter@Central.uh.edu](mailto:jdcenter@Central.uh.edu).

We also ask that you contact Samantha Ary, Academic Records Coordinator at the Law Center. Ms. Ary's office is in the Office of Student Services suite. She can be reached by [email](#) or at (713) 743-7466. *Requests for accommodation that involve graded assignments should be directed to Ms. Ary as soon as possible to allow adequate time to process the request.* She can assist you as you navigate the Dart Center process.

**Class Recordings.** I may record some classes, depending on student needs. If a class is recorded, I will post a link to the recordings on the Canvas course management system as soon as they are available. You may use these recordings for your own studying and notetaking purposes, but please do not share them with anyone. University policy mandates that an 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.

**Mental Health and Wellness Resources.** The University of Houston has several 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](http://uh.edu/caps), call 713-743-5454, or visit a Let's Talk location in person or virtually. Let's Talk is a daily, informal, confidential consultation with CAPS therapists, during which 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, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. - 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 the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988 or chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).

The Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program (TLAP) also 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 mental health resources that interest law students. Check it out.

**Title IX/Sexual Misconduct.** Per the UH System Sexual Misconduct Policy, I am 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 I become aware to the Title IX office. Please know there are places on campus where you can confidentially make a report. You can find more information about resources here on [the Title IX website](#).

**Syllabus.** We will cover the following topics in class each day.

<b>Class</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
<b>Day 1</b> Monday, Aug 11	<b>Legal English   Sources of U.S. Law   Introduction to the Socratic Method</b> Analyzing Authorities   Sources and Components of U.S. Legal Rules
<b>Day 2</b> Tuesday, Aug 12	<b>Effectively Reading and Understanding U.S. Law   Mastering the Socratic Method</b> Critical Reading Skills   Understanding IRAC   Issue Spotting   Rule Formulation
<b>Day 3</b> Wednesday, Aug 13	<b>Successfully Completing Your U.S. Course of Study</b> Reading Efficiently   Using Case Briefs   The 3-Step Study Process   Using Outlines
<b>Day 4</b> Thursday, Aug 14	<b>U.S. Principles of Professionalism in the Study and Practice of Law</b> Honor Code   Plagiarism   Professional Responsibility  <b>Resources Available to You</b> Legal Writing Center   Your Professors and Tutors   Former Students
<b>Day 5</b> Friday, Aug 15	<b>Final Exam</b>