

Lawyers as Leaders

Course 5246/25904

Fall 2025

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Class Style: Face to Face / Fridays 1 pm to 2:50 pm

Office Hours: By Appointment. Please contact professor via email for a mutually available time.

Course Objectives / Learning Objectives:

Following this course, students will have met the following learning objectives:

- ✓ Demonstrate authentic leadership in legal settings through applied experiences and simulations.
- ✓ Engage in self-assessment and reflection to identify leadership strengths and areas for growth.
- ✓ Develop and practice essential leadership skills such as communication, resilience, and influence with a strong emphasis on both giving and receiving feedback.
- ✓ Apply leadership principles to professional challenges through problem-solving exercises.
- ✓ Practice effective leadership communication, including crisis management and public messaging.
- ✓ Collaborate with peers to navigate leadership dilemmas and decision-making exercises.
- ✓ Create a personal leadership development plan based on experiential learning.
- ✓ Fulfill two credits of the experiential learning required by the State Bar of Texas.

Through these objectives, students will actively engage in analysis, critical reasoning, problem-solving, effective written and oral communication, ethical decision-making, and professional self-development.

Required Reading:

- Fundamentals of Lawyer Leadership by Leah W. Teague, Elizabeth M. Fraley, and Stephen L. Rispoli
- Various Handout Materials as Provided by Professor

Teaching Pedagogy / Philosophy:

This course is designed to be highly interactive, experiential, and practice-oriented, focusing on the development of leadership skills that are essential for lawyers in diverse settings. Rather than traditional lectures, I emphasize engaged learning through discussion, self-reflection, and real-world simulations.

My teaching philosophy is rooted in the belief that leadership is best learned through experience and application. Much of what I have learned about leadership comes from firsthand experience, decision-making, and self-reflection. I firmly believe that, regardless of your career path, your most valuable leadership lessons will also come from lived experiences and intentional self-reflection. To that end, this course will incorporate:

- ❖ Experiential Learning – Students will actively participate in simulations and leadership exercises, applying concepts in real-world contexts rather than passively absorbing information.
- ❖ Flipped Classroom Approach – Students are expected to review readings and materials in advance, allowing class time to focus on discussion and hands-on exercises.
- ❖ Collaborative Engagement – Leadership is inherently relational, and students will work together to navigate dilemmas, provide peer feedback, and build leadership presence.
- ❖ Self-Reflection & Personal Development – Through self-assessments, structured reflections, and leadership planning exercises, students will gain a deeper understanding of their leadership strengths, areas for growth, and long-term professional aspirations.

Throughout the course, I will challenge students to think critically, engage meaningfully, and take ownership of their leadership development. While I serve as a guide and facilitator, much of the learning will come from active participation, self-discovery, and peer collaboration.

This course is designed to prepare students not only to understand leadership principles but to embody them in their professional and personal lives. Success in this class is not about memorizing leadership theories or studying case briefs—it is about engaging fully, leading with authenticity, and applying leadership skills in meaningful ways.

Attendance:

This class is in person, face to face, at the University of Houston Law Center.

The University of Houston Law Center has a minimum 80% attendance policy for all students. As this is a once-a-week course, students who miss more than two classes will be dropped from the course. Any missed classes must be made up by contacting the professor for alternative arrangements.

Additionally, this course is a simulation-based course, meaning that meeting the objectives and gaining value require active participation in class, not merely completing readings or written assignments. You are expected to attend all classes and actively participate. As a small, discussion-driven class, every student’s participation is essential for a rich and dynamic learning experience.

My commitment to you is that I will make every effort to avoid cancellations. In the rare, unlikely event that a class must be canceled due to unforeseen circumstances, I will schedule a make-up session.

Grading:

The Pass / Fail option is not available for this course. Your final grade will be based on the total points earned across multiple components, as outlined below. Given the interactive and discussion-based nature of this course, assessments will not be anonymous.

Written assignments can generally be half to a full page with a maximum of two pages (always double spaced), unless otherwise specified in the detailed course schedule. Submissions should demonstrate self-reflection, engagement with the reading material, and consideration of alternative perspectives. Grades will be based primarily on the depth and quality of your reflections rather than the length of your response.

| Assessment Category | Maximum Points |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Attendance | 150 |
| Class Participation | 300 |
| Written Assignments | 900 (100 per assignment) |
| Guest Speaker Journal | 150 |
| Total | 1500 |

Assignment feedback will be provided through detailed professor commentary rather than numerical grades. While this may feel unfamiliar to some students, the focus of this course is on leadership growth, self-reflection, and skill development, rather than numerical assessments. Leadership is an evolving process, and meaningful improvement comes from engagement with feedback rather than an isolated score. Final grades will be determined in accordance with university grading policies.

Your grade may also be raised (or lowered) from your calculated final grade based on the Professor’s reasonable judgment of your efforts and class participation. The final grade distribution will be subject to any required grading protocols mandated by the Law Center.

Assignments & Guest Speaker Journal:

Assignments are listed in detail in the below Course Schedule.

Submission Policies: All Assignments must be submitted before the start of class each Friday (no later than 12:59 pm on Friday). Late assignments will not be accepted under any circumstances. Students must complete all assignments to receive credit for the course. All page number references in assignments correspond to the required course text.

Guest Speaker Journal:

For each guest speaker, you must identify at least one key message or concepts that resonated with you. Write a minimum of one paragraph per key message explaining:

- Why this message stood out to you
- How you can apply this lesson to strengthen your leadership skills

The Guest Speaker Journal is intended to help you connect real-world leadership insights with your own professional development. The journal is due before the last day of classes (November 21, 2025), but students may submit it anytime after the final guest speaker session.

Prohibition on Use of AI:

The software technology known as artificial intelligence has recently expanded its capability to generate text and other work product (AI Generated Work Product). Examples of the technology include what are known as “generative” large language models (LLMs), and a specific implementation what is well known in the general public is ChatGPT. These systems can generate text and other work product in response to prompts and/or input of other text/documents/code/images. The output, the AI Generated Work Product, appears to have human mimicking “intelligence” and is thus potentially usable as a substitute for material one might generate themselves. AI Generated Work Product can include computer code or programs as well as human language content and materials.

Your continuing enrollment in this course obligates you to not knowingly prompt, generate, or use any AI Generated Work Product in relation to any activity or assessment in this course. This applies to AI Generated Work Product from yourself or others. This obligation includes that your assessment materials in the course be without **any** contribution from AI Generated Work Product. This obligation specifically extends to not plagiarize any writing required of you for assessment in the course: AI Generated Work Product will be treated as from another/others in applying the plagiarism policy to this course. The term “assessment” means any material generated for this course that is submitted to the instructor or presented in a class session, regardless whether it is graded content or not.

Classroom Professionalism:

Participation

Our classroom is a learning space where each student is 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 background or identity. I encourage you to speak up and share your views appropriately throughout the semester. Your conduct in the classroom is an important part of the class participation score for grading purposes. Please also remember that the Code of Professionalism in the student handbook:

<https://www.law.uh.edu/jd/current/handbook.pdf#page=42> will apply to all classes at UHLC.

At least three (3) of the class sessions will include a guest speaker. On days where class includes a guest speaker, students must come prepared to discuss any topics covered up to that point in the course.

Confidentiality & Respect

I also expect every class member to remember that in this learning environment, we will engage respectfully and with professionalism toward each other. Confidentiality is essential to maintaining a supportive learning environment. As each of us develops in our leadership journey, it is critical that we respect the privacy of our classmates and not share personal insights or experiences shared in class with others outside of this space.

For further details on fostering a respectful and inclusive environment, please review the Wellness & Inclusion section of this syllabus.

Use of Computers and Technology

Out of respect for other students and the class environment, during class sessions computers are to be used only for note taking purposes. This prohibits computer use for Internet surfing, chat rooms, e-mail, or other uses not related to note taking for class. I reserve the right to treat violations of this policy as either a lack of preparation, a constructive lack of attendance, or, in appropriate circumstances, as a disruption of the class. In addition, during class please disable the speaker on your computer and refrain from displaying wallpaper, screen savers, or other material on your laptop computer screen that can reasonably be expected to offend or distract your classmates. Also, please ensure that all other noise making electronics, such as watches, cell phones, pagers, etc., are in a silent mode or powered off.

- ! Guest Speakers: To show respect for our speakers and ensure full engagement, laptops may not be used during guest speaker sessions. Students may use a notepad for handwritten notes to capture key insights from the speakers.

Course Schedule:

The following course schedule outlines the objectives, required readings, and assignments for each class session. This detail is designed to provide an understanding of the course and student expectations.

Week 1: August 29, 2025

Learning Objective(s):

- ✓ Develop, apply, and demonstrate key leadership fundamental concepts in the legal profession.
- ✓ Engage in self-assessment and reflection to identify leadership strengths and areas for growth.
- ✓ Understand the meaning of leadership generally and to each of us as an individual.

Required Reading:

Chapter 1: What is Leadership
Chapter 2: Why Lawyers Should Study Leadership
Chapter 3: Leading vs Managing

Assignment #1: (Do this before class)

Find and bring to class a short leadership quote that resonates with you. Have it written or typed on a separate sheet of paper. A build on this will be completed in class.

Week 2: September 5, 2025

Learning Objective(s):

- ✓ Develop, apply, and demonstrate essential leadership skills such as communication, resilience, and influence.
- ✓ Engage in self-assessment to understand personal leadership styles and traits.
- ✓ Understand core leadership theories and how they shape leadership philosophy.
- ✓ Recognize that leadership theories provide a foundation for leaders' thoughts and styles.

Required Reading:

Chapter 4: Understanding Leadership Theory
Chapter 5: Character, Traits, and Characteristics of Leaders

Week 3: September 12, 2025

Learning Objective(s):

- ✓ Develop, apply, and demonstrate essential leadership skills, including adaptability and decision-making.
- ✓ Engage in self-reflection to understand strengths and growth areas in leadership styles.
- ✓ Understand how leadership styles (Goleman's six styles) dictate real-world leadership behavior.
- ✓ Learn to adapt leadership styles based on context, team dynamics, and challenges.
- ✓ Apply leadership styles to real-world legal and business scenarios.

Required Reading:

Chapter 6: Skills, Competencies, and Leadership Style

Assignment #2:

- After reviewing your DiSC assessment results, reflect on how your identified personality and leadership traits influence your interactions, decision-making, and approach to leadership.
- Identify which of Goleman's six leadership styles align most with your DiSC profile.
- Reflect on a real situation where your DiSC style influenced your approach and your leadership style. Describe the situation and how your DiSC traits affected your style and decisions.

Week 4: September 19, 2025 (Note change to switch activities for classes 4 and 5 since original syllabus.)

Learning Objective(s):

- ✓ Engage in self-assessment and reflection to identify personal leadership strengths and areas for growth.
- ✓ Lead and support others in goal-setting and professional and legal leadership contexts.
- ✓ Develop meaningful, structured goals to enhance leadership skills. Create a personal leadership development plan based on experiential learning.

Required Reading:

Chapter 9: Setting Goals
Spider Chart Self Evaluation Handout

Assignment #4:

- Develop your own spider chart to assess your leadership skills. As part of this development, interview a mentor, supervisor, or peer about how they perceive your leadership strengths and weaknesses. Write a brief description comparing their insights to your own self-assessment, reflecting on the differences.
- Identify three areas where you want to improve over the next 12 months based on your self-evaluation. Write a brief description of how strengthening these areas will enhance your leadership effectiveness.
- In addition to submitting via email, bring a copy of this spider chart with you for the class period.

Week 5: September 26, 2025 (Note change to switch activities for classes 4 and 5 since original syllabus.)

Learning Objective(s):

- ✓ Demonstrate resilience as a leadership competency through experiential exercises.
- ✓ Develop strategies to cultivate resilience in oneself and others.
- ✓ Understand grit and resilience impact on leadership.
- ✓ Apply resilience strategies to real-world legal and leadership challenges.

Required Reading:

Chapter 8: Grit & Resilience

Assignment #3:

- Create your failure resume. Instead of listing your achievements, construct a resume of failures, setbacks or challenges you have faced. These can be academic, professional, personal, or leadership setbacks. For each, include a short (two sentences or less) description of the instance, what you learned from the experience and how it shaped your resilience and approach.
- Key Note on Format: This is not an essay. Bullet points or short phrases are acceptable.
- Critical Notice: Your assessment on this assignment will be focused on the amount of effort and your self-reflection learnings. Your assignment will be kept completely confidential. Our focus in class will be around growth and takeaways not failures themselves.

Week 6: October 3, 2025

Learning Objective(s):

- ✓ Develop, apply, and demonstrate the ability to give and receive feedback constructively.
- ✓ Identify and leverage mentorship for leadership growth.

Required Reading:

Chapter 10: Giving and Receiving Feedback
Personal Board of Directors Handout

Assignment #5:

- Identify your own personal board of directors—a group of individuals who can provide guidance, mentorship, and feedback to help you grow as a leader.
- For each member, describe their skills, experience, and background and explain how they can contribute to your leadership development.
- If you identify a gap in your board (a role you need but don't currently have someone for), define the ideal characteristics of that person and outline a plan for finding and engaging with such an individual in the future.
- Finally, reach out to one current or potential board member and ask for a piece of leadership advice. Summarize the key takeaways from your conversation in a brief written reflection.

Week 7: October 10, 2025

Learning Objective(s):

- ✓ Recognize the connection between well-being and effective leadership, including how self-care impacts decision-making, resilience, and team dynamics.
- ✓ Analyze how self-management and energy influence leadership interactions and the ability to motivate, engage, and lead others effectively.
- ✓ Evaluate the role of leaders in shaping team energy by managing their own presence, adjusting energy levels, and influencing group dynamics.
- ✓ Develop, apply, and demonstrate strategies for reframing perspective in high-stakes situations to shift energy, regulate emotions, and maintain leadership effectiveness.

Required Reading:

Chapter 11: The Importance of Well Being

Assignment #6:

- Reflect on the quote: “Don't adapt to the energy in the room. Influence the energy in the room.” (original source unknown).
- As a lawyer and leader, describe how your well-being affects the energy you bring to interactions.
- Consider the type of law you intend to practice or a leadership role you aspire to hold. Discuss how you can adjust your energy to positively influence others in that context.
- Describe a real moment when the energy in a room affected your ability to contribute or lead. What did you do in response? Reflecting now, how could you have handled that situation differently?
- Finally, examine how you react to the energy of others and analyze how this response can either strengthen or weaken your effectiveness as a leader.

Week 8: October 17, 2025

Learning Objective(s):

- ✓ Apply leadership principles to ethical and professional challenges, demonstrating integrity in complex decision making.
- ✓ Recognize how integrity and situational leadership influence decision making, balancing core values with adaptability in leadership roles.
- ✓ Evaluate personal leadership integrity, identifying ways to adjust approaches without compromising values.
- ✓ Develop, apply, and demonstrate strategies for leading with integrity in dynamic environments, ensuring ethical consistency when responding to changing circumstances.

Required Reading:

Chapter 12: Integrity
Chapter 13: The Right Leader at the Right Time

Assignment #7:

- Complete the exercise “The Right Leader at the Right Time with the Right Speech” on p. 233.

Week 9: October 24, 2025

Learning Objective(s):

- ✓ Analyze the role of emotional intelligence (EQ) in leadership, including self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and relationship management.
- ✓ Identify how emotions influence decision-making and interactions in leadership, using real-world examples and video analysis.
- ✓ Develop, apply, and demonstrate emotional intelligence strategies to influence outcomes, including conflict resolution, persuasion, and crisis management.
- ✓ Evaluate personal emotional intelligence skills and areas for growth, recognizing how leaders adjust their approach to different emotional contexts.
- ✓ Demonstrate the ability to navigate emotionally charged situations through role-playing and discussion, practicing leadership influence in high-stakes scenarios.
- ✓ Strengthen emotional intelligence for effective leadership.

Required Reading:

Chapter 14: Leadership and Emotional Intelligence
Chapter 15: Relationships & Influence

Week 10: October 31, 2025

Learning Objective(s):

- ✓ Understand the role of followership in leadership development.
- ✓ Analyze how effective leaders empower and support those they lead.
- ✓ Evaluate appropriate times to challenge leadership considering ethics, strategy, and professional implications.
- ✓ Develop, apply, and demonstrate skills for constructively challenging leadership.

Required Reading:

Chapter 16: Followership

Week 11: November 7, 2025

Learning Objective(s):

- ✓ Demonstrate leadership communication in high-pressure situations, adapting to audiences and constraints.
- ✓ Demonstrate strategic thinking and decision-making skills by adjusting communication styles to fit various leadership contexts.
- ✓ Develop, apply, and demonstrate active listening and nonverbal communication skills, recognizing their impact on leadership effectiveness.
- ✓ Enhance flexibility in communication, learning to modify tone, structure, and approach to improve clarity and persuasion.

Required Reading:

Chapter 18: Communication Styles, Public Relations, and Crisis Management
Crisis Management Communication Scenario Handout

Assignment #8:

- Prepare an internal crisis management briefing memo based on the scenario provided in the Crisis Management Communication Scenario Handout.
- Unlike traditional law firm memos from the first-year Lawyer Skills and Strategies course, this is an internal leadership memo that should be concise, direct, and action-oriented. It is not an analysis with case briefs, summaries, or footnotes. Approach this as a practical communication tool for non-lawyers in leadership or management roles.
- Your memo should analyze key risks, outline a strategic response, and provide leadership guidance for handling the crisis effectively.
- In addition to the formal memo, include a separate reflective paragraph on how you would handle this crisis if you were the actual decision-maker. Refer to your DiSC profile and Spider Chart self-assessment, and describe in one to two sentences how these leadership insights could influence your decision-making in this scenario.
- Length Requirement: 2–3 pages. ****This is a longer assignment than most.****

Week 12: November 14, 2025

Learning Objective(s):

- ✓ Define long-term leadership impact and legacy; recognizing how leadership extends beyond individuals.
- ✓ Develop a personal leadership vision, aligning values and long-term influence.
- ✓ Reflect on how others perceive leadership impact, using peer exchanges to gain insights on personal leadership goals and visions.

Required Reading:

Chapter 22: The Complete Lawyer
Chapter 23: Legacy and Impact

Assignment #9:

- Imagine your retirement day and reflect on the legacy and impact you want to leave through your leadership and influence.
- Draft remarks that would be made at your retirement celebration, capturing the perspectives of at least four different individuals with diverse roles and relationships to you.
- Consider voices such as a leader, colleague, client, judge, negotiation counterpart, opposing counsel, community leader, volunteer organization representative, or others who would speak to your professional and personal contributions.
- Guidance: Your remarks should reflect authentic leadership impact, focusing on the qualities, actions, and values you want to be remembered for.

Week 13: November 21, 2025

Learning Objective(s):

- ✓ Integrate key leadership lessons learned throughout the course.
- ✓ Reflect on leadership growth and next steps in professional development.

No Required Reading. Effective Leadership and Wrap-Up

There is no final exam for this course.

UHLC 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.

Class Recording

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.

Wellness & Inclusion

I believe that wellness is a fundamental part of being an effective leader. As such, I want every student in this class to feel included, valued, and supported—for your success in this course and your growth as a leader.

This class is an inclusive learning space. At UHLC, we are committed to ensuring inclusive online and classroom learning spaces, where you'll be treated with respect and dignity, and where everyone is provided the equitable opportunity to participate, to contribute, and to 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 and other diverse identities that we each bring to class. Our class is richer for this diversity. I expect every student to extend this same respect and inclusiveness to their classmates, guest speakers, and me as the professor. This is part of your mutual success and is required for you to be a great leader in the community, companies, organizations, and society.

Inclusive learning spaces facilitate the innovation and creative thought that enhance student success. This success arises from the participation, support, and understanding of you and your colleagues. I encourage you to speak up and to share your views, but also understand that you are doing so in a learning environment in which we're all expected to engage respectfully and with regard to the dignity of all others.

If you feel like your class performance is impacted in any way by your experiences inside or 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 (OSA) is an excellent resource.

The University Of Houston 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.

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/>.

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.

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. The Center for Student Advocacy and Community (CSAC) is where you can go if you need help but don't know where to start. CSAC is a "home away from home" and serves as a resource hub to help you get the resources needed to support academic and personal success. Through our Cougar Cupboard, all students can get up to 30 lbs of FREE groceries a week. Additionally, we provide 1:1 appointments to get you connected to on- and off-campus resources related to essential needs, safety and advocacy, and more. The Cougar Closet is a registered student organization advised by our office and offers free clothes to students so that all Coogs can feel good in their fit. We also host a series of cultural and community-based events that fosters social connection and helps the cougar community come closer together. Visit the CSAC homepage or follow us on Instagram: [@uh_CSAC](#) and [@uhcupbrd](#). You belong here.

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 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday.