

Legal Methods

August 2026

lepsimmons@uh.edu

Office Hours (343R): By appointment

Telephone: 650-644-8207 (Simmons)

Office Hours: By Appointment (343R). We will have a mandatory 1:1 on Wednesday or Thursday.

Class Room: 100

Class Webpage: Canvas

Course Objective:

This course will focus on developing skills necessary to be successful in law school. The course will provide instruction, as well as opportunities to practice and hone the skills taught, so that students will be adequately prepared to draft legal writing exercises and law school final exams.

Goals:

- To teach systematic case briefing skills to enable students to successfully prepare for class each day
- To teach essay writing skills to enable students to write high-scoring essays, as well as writing for an objective MPT
- To provide students with opportunities to self-reflect and garner a better understanding of the tools and skills necessary to successfully perform their 1L year and beyond

Outcomes:

- Students will draft a legally accurate case briefing
- Students will write an essay employing IRAC (issue, rule, application, conclusion) format with clear rule sections and robust application sections, arriving at an appropriate conclusion
- Students will offer three tangible goals for academic improvement in the coming semester

Class sessions:

August 17-20, 2026, daily, 9am-12:15pm

Students will be required to attend one mandatory advising session during the week (the one-on-one advising session time will be set on an individual basis)

Reading Material:

None

The class materials and assignments will be provided by the professor.

Office hours:

If you have any questions about the course, please ask me! Questions are welcome and encouraged.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, you may reach out to me. Please make an appointment if you have questions about the course or any assignments. During our appointment, we can review questions together, discuss study strategies, discuss best practices for class and exam preparation, and explore any questions, thoughts, or concerns you have about the course.

Grading:

This class is pass/fail.

To recognize the effort you put into this class from day to day, your grade will be spread across the week. Your grade will be taken, in part, from completion of assignments, an individual conference, essays, reflective pieces, and MPTs. The goal of these assignments is to give you an opportunity to engage with the material and strategies.

Part of your grade will come from rewriting your initial response, if requested.

Please note: To pass this class you are required to complete 100% of all assignments (including those assigned for completion out-of-class). The failure to complete 100%, including any requested re-writes, will result in a failing grade for the class.

Student Participation:

You are expected to discuss the assigned material in depth, so please make a commitment to be prepared. Your advanced preparation gives you the best opportunity to correctly synthesize and participate in our class discussion. Be prepared to actively engage – including completing any and all out of class assignments.

While the class is pass/fail, students with poor class participation may have their final grade dropped from passing to failing. The decision to drop a grade for participation is at our discretion and is non-negotiable. A drop in grade due to failure to participate in class can result from a combination of unpreparedness, not paying attention in class, and absences (even if you are within the twenty percent-absence limit). Note that volunteering every class does not constitute a substantial contribution—quality, not quantity matters.

Computer and Phone Use:

The permitted use of personal computers in the classroom is permitted solely for the purpose of completing class assignments (i.e. MPTs, note taking). Specifically excluded from in-class computer usage is anything beyond these activities, e.g., “surfing the web” and messaging. When we are not completing an assignment for this class, your computer should be put away. Nonparticipation and nonresponsiveness in the classroom discussion attributable to diversionary uses of your personal computer or phone constitutes an absence from the class. The instructor reserves the right to disallow the use of laptops in the classroom at any time throughout the semester. The use of other electronics, including recording devices, is prohibited during class time. Please be sure that all noise-making devices, including cell phones, are in silent mode or powered off. Phones should be put away during class.

Your camera should be on during all class sessions that (may) occur virtually. You are welcome to use a virtual background, provided it is school appropriate. If this is a problem, please reach out to me individually.

Communication:

Students should check their emails and Canvas regularly and consistently. I will send emails to the whole class or individually. These emails may contain important details and time sensitive materials. It is imperative that you check your emails frequently as you will be responsible for the content and information provided in those communications as it pertains to the course and assignments.

Please check and use your CougarNet email for communications related to this course. To access this email, login to your Microsoft 365 account with your CougarNet credentials.

Instructor Evaluations:

I welcome any comments or suggestions that you may have regarding instructor teaching style, class presentation, or any other related subject. Please feel free to provide me such comments during the course of the semester as they will help me

improve this program. I will carefully consider all of the comments and suggestions that I receive.

Proposed Course Outline and Syllabus Changes:

A separate proposed schedule for the semester (“Course Schedule”) will be distributed by the instructor. It will include class assignments, homework, and relevant dates of assessments. The instructor may, of course, modify it as the semester progresses, to achieve course objectives. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through Canvas or email.

First Week’s Assignments:

Your instructor will provide you with a schedule of assignments the week prior to class starting.

Each class, please bring your computer and be prepared to take notes.

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.

Prohibited Use of Artificial Intelligence

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. Assessments include mid-terms and final exams. AI Generated Work Product may not be used in the development or drafting of any assessments created by you in a non-proctored environment, such as a “take-home” final examination.

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.

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.

Women and Gender Resource Center

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.

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.

Resources for Online Learning

The University of Houston is committed to student success, and provides information to optimize the online learning experience through our Power-On website (<https://uh.edu/power-on/learning/>). Please visit this website for a comprehensive set of resources, tools, and tips including: obtaining access to the internet, AccessUH, and Canvas; using your smartphone as a webcam; and downloading Microsoft Office 365 at no cost. For questions or assistance contact UHOnline@uh.edu.

UH Email

Please check and use your CougarNet email for communications related to this course. Faculty use the CougarNet email to respond to course-related inquiries such as grade queries or progress reports for reasons of FERPA. To access your CougarNet email, login to your Microsoft 365 account with your CougarNet credentials. Visit University Information Technology (UIT) for instructions on how to connect your CougarNet e-mail on a mobile device.

Security Escorts and Cougar Ride

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" that 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/>.