

Advanced Legal Research: Trial Advocacy

Fall 2026 – 5134/19338

Prof. Rob Brownell

Tuesdays, 2:30-3:30

This syllabus is subject to change, and any changes will be announced to the entire class.

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I. COURSE INFORMATION

A. General

Course

- **Course Title and Number:** 5134 ALR: Trial Advocacy – 19338
- **Course Location and Time:** Room 213, T 2:30-3:30
- **Instructional Mode:** Face-to-Face (meet in person)

Instructor

- **Name:** Rob Brownell
- **Email:** rbbrowne@central.uh.edu
- **Office Phone Number:** 713.743.5801
- **Office Location:** 421K (in the librarian suite on the 4th floor)
- **Office Hours:** By arrangement

B. Course Texts & Materials

None. All necessary materials will be placed on the course's Canvas page.

C. Course Description & Learning Outcomes

This is a specialized course on legal research methods as they pertain to trial advocacy. It will cover general legal research topics and resources (issue analysis, secondary sources, statutes, cases, etc.) within the litigation context, focusing on practical application. Students will apply their skills through research problems that simulate legal practice.

By the end of this course, you'll be able to:

- Design a successful research strategy, including selecting appropriate sources, creating effective searches, and refining your strategy when needed
- Critically select and efficiently locate the most appropriate sources for a research problem, considering time, cost, and availability of resources
- Evaluate the reliability of information, including its authority, credibility, currency, and authenticity
- Confirm and validate your research results
- Organize your research findings for practical application

D. What to Expect

This course is largely student driven. Students will learn research by doing research for a hypothetical case that we will build together. The class will be divided into two

law firms, each representing their own client. The firms decide, both collaboratively and antagonistically, how the case proceeds, by “acting out” the case from complaint to however far we can get in our limited time. As the firms make decisions, they will be given instruction and guidance on how to do the necessary research, with small assignments tied to their firm-determined tasks.

Bottom line, students will have ample guidance, but they will also be expected to take ownership of their own learning. Reach out to Professor Brownell if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

E. Grading

Course grades are determined by performance on the following:

- Homework: 40%
- Projects: 30%
- Participation:¹ 20%
- Reflections: 10%

Pass/fail election is available, subject to UHLC restrictions. *If you elect to take this class pass/fail, you must hand in all assignments to pass.*

F. Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory and will be recorded for each class meeting. Excused absences should be arranged before class – if possible. Failure to arrange for an excused absence may result in an unexcused absence and a deduction in the participation portion of your grade.

G. Late Work

You are expected to turn in graded assignments by the date and time designated on the course schedule. This course simulates a work environment, so deadlines are strictly enforced. It is your responsibility to communicate any emergencies that may affect your ability to submit assignments on time. Failure to hand things on time will result in deductions to your grade.

¹ This is an experiential course, intended to help you become practice ready. As such, participation and practice are critical elements of success in this course. Examples of class participation include asking/answering questions, meeting with the instructor during office hours or by appointment, participating fully during in-class exercises, and completing any pre- or post-class exercises on time.

H. Group Work/Collaboration

Unless specifically designated as collaborative work, all graded assignments must be solely your own work. Copying answers or providing answers to copy will be reported to the Honor Board and will result in a zero on the assignment in question for all involved. All quoted material must be in quotations and properly cited.

I. AI Generated Text

The software technology known as artificial intelligence has recently expanded its capability to generate text (AI Generated Text). 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 in response to prompts and/or input of other text/documents/code/images. The output, the AI Generated Text, appears to have human mimicking “intelligence” and is thus potentially usable as a substitute for written work product one might generate themselves. AI Generated Text can include computer code or programs as well as human language content.

Your continuing enrollment in this course is deemed to be a pledge by you under the Honor Code to not prompt, generate, obtain, read, or use any AI Generated Text in relation to any activity or assessment in this course. This applies to AI Generated Text from yourself or others. This pledge includes that your assessment work product in the course is without any contribution from AI Generated Text. This specifically extends to the plagiarism policy and unauthorized aid/materials parts of the Honor Code: AI Generated Text will be treated as from another/other in applying the plagiarism policy to this course. The term “assessment” means any work product 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 Text 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 unless specified as an exception below. The parts of the Honor Code that refer to unauthorized materials or aid are specifically prohibited from any use of AI Generated Text in this course unless specified as an exception below.

- creating content for an outline that you use to summarize the course content
- “conversing” with the AI Generated Text software system to create hypotheticals to better understand course content, alone or with others
- checking text drafted by you for misspellings, grammar and punctuation errors, strength and clarity of prose, verbosity, effective transitional language and thesis sentences, word choice, excessive passive voice, and like things
- when expressly indicated by me, Prof. Rob Brownell

II. UNIVERSITY & OTHER RESOURCES

A. 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.

B. 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](#).

C. 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](#).

D. 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 their website](#), 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 the Cougar Cupboard, all students can get up to 30 lbs of FREE groceries a week. Additionally, they 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 their office and offers free clothes to students so that all Coogs can feel good in their fit. They 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.

E. 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.

F. Resources for Online Learning:

The University of Houston is committed to student success and provides information to optimize the online learning experience through the [Power-On website](#). Please visit this website for a comprehensive set of resources, tools, and

tips including obtaining access to the internet, AccessUH, Blackboard, and Canvas; using your smartphone as a webcam; and downloading Microsoft Office 365 at no cost. For questions or assistance contact UHOnline@uh.edu.

G. 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 [Law Information Technology \(LIT\)](#) for instructions on how to connect your CougarNet e-mail on a mobile device.

H. 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. You can find more information, like days and hours of operation can be found at the [Cougar Ride website](#).