

LAWYERING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES SYLLABUS - FALL 2026
Course 5314, Sections 12472 (B1) & 12476 (A4)
Professor Harve Truskett

Professor Truskett's Contact Information

Office in O'Quinn Building: TBD

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Office Number: TBD

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 4:00 pm–5:00 pm; and via appointment

Class Meetings and Administration

This class will meet in person, face-to-face as listed below.

Section	Days	Time	Room
B1 – 12469	Tuesdays	9:00 am–10:30 am	210
	Thursdays	10:30 am–12:00 pm	
A4 – 12476	Tuesdays and Thursdays	2:30 pm–4:00 pm	207

Be prepared to discuss the readings and exercises that I assign for each class. I may call on students at random. If you are not prepared for class, please email me before class to let me know. Your level of preparation will count toward your Professionalism and Exercise Completion grade discussed below.

Class Home Page

Our class has a Canvas page where course materials, course communications, and other information are posted. Please make sure to check it regularly.

Required Texts and Readings and Materials

1. Robin Boyle-Laisure, Christine Coughlin, & Sandy Patrick, Becoming a Legal Writer (Carolina Academic Press, 2d ed. 2025) (ISBN 978-1-5310-2381-2).
2. The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation (Columbia Law Review Ass'n et al. eds., 22d ed. 2025) (the “Bluebook”) (ISBN: 979-8-218-57457-4). **You must purchase a print copy of the Bluebook, as you will need it for in-class assignments and for the final exam. You will need this book all year, not just for fall semester.**
3. Handouts, web links, and other material posted on Canvas.

Recommended Texts

Manual on Usage & Style Texas Law Review 15th ed. 2020), ISBN: 1-878674-59-5. You can purchase the e-book [here](#).

Core Grammar for Lawyers, available at www.coregrammarforlawyers.com.

Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is essential for your success in this course. It is your responsibility to be on time for class. I will take attendance in the first **ten** minutes of each class by having students initial the attendance sheet by their name. It is your responsibility to initial the attendance sheet for each class during that time. Thereafter, I reserve the right to mark students absent if they have failed to initial the attendance sheet.

Missing more than **four** classes will make you subject to dismissal from the class. In addition, absences (even if you are within the four-absence limit) or tardiness (even for arrivals less than ten minutes after the scheduled starting time for class) may result in a deduction of your Professionalism and Exercise Completion grade. Please contact me as soon as possible to alert me to any issues you are facing that affect your attendance or punctuality.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This course introduces you to the American legal system and the skills required for effective practice of law. We will focus this semester on written legal analysis and the components and structure of an objective legal memorandum. Using problem-based simulations, you will develop essential lawyering skills such as client and oral communication, citation, legal writing, research, analysis, and strategic planning skills, along with professionalism and ethical reasoning.

You can expect to learn and practice the following skills or competencies (learning outcomes) throughout the semester:

1. Understanding the sources, hierarchy, and precedential value of laws.
2. Distinguishing different types of legal rules, dissecting rules into their basic components, and synthesizing legal rules using multiple sources.
3. Identifying issues applicable to a client's case.
4. Effectively executing online legal research and selecting appropriate authority to address issues in your client's case.
5. Understanding and applying case precedent to the client's case.
6. Understanding and applying enacted law to the client's case.
7. Translating legal research and analysis into objective writing that is organized effectively; conveying all relevant content clearly and concisely; and omitting extraneous matters.
8. Understanding and applying legal citation proficiently using the Bluebook and

- Greenbook citation formats.
9. Understanding and using correct grammar and punctuation regardless of the document or communication drafted.
 10. Understanding how the topics discussed and assignments given in the course fit into the practice of law.
 11. Recognizing ethical and professional issues in practice.

Assignments and Grading

A detailed list of required readings, topics, and assignments (“Class Schedule”)¹ for each class is attached below to this Syllabus.

The following assignments constitute the baseline for your grade for this course:

Graded Assignments

1. **Research Assessments (first worth 10%, second worth 15% of Course Grade)**

You will have two in-class assessments of your research skills gained through the Research Modules. Bring your laptop to class for each of these timed assessments. You will submit your answers anonymously.

2. **Final Memorandum (35% of Course Grade)**

You will research and write a memorandum addressing the issues presented by the file. This memo will be submitted anonymously.

3. **LRW Exam (35% of Course Grade)**

At the end of the semester, you will take a three-hour exam that will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and a longer form answer. This Exam will cover skills and concepts from the entire semester. This Exam will be submitted anonymously.

4. **Professionalism and Exercise Completion (5% of Course Grade)**

As future attorneys, I expect you to demonstrate professionalism in this class. This means coming to class and to meetings with me on time and prepared, participating in class discussions, avoiding using social media, chats and similar programs in class when we are using laptops, making a good faith effort on ungraded assignments, and showing respect for me and other students during class and in any email or other communications. In addition, an important part of your professionalism grade will be timely completion of and *making a good faith effort on* any exercises I ask you to do. Unexcused failure in any regard

¹ I will attach a detailed Class Schedule closer to the start of the semester.

will result in a loss of professionalism points.

Deadlines

If a graded assignment is not turned in by the deadline, I may deduct 10% of your total points during each hour that your assignment is late, starting with the first hour. So, if your assignment is due at 10 am on a given day, I may deduct 10% if you submit it at 10:05 am on the due date, 20% if you submit it at 11:05 am, etc.

I will grant extensions for emergencies only. While I reserve the right to determine what constitutes an emergency, technology issues immediately prior to a deadline, failure to backup your work product, and routine illness will not be considered emergencies.

The Law Center uses an anonymous grading system to ensure fairness in grading. Your name should not appear anywhere on the graded assignments. You should not give me your formative or summative identifier, whichever applicable, and you should take care to avoid providing information on graded assignments that may identify you. I reserve the right to deduct points from a graded assignment if you fail to abide by instructions that are intended to safeguard anonymity, including those regarding extension requests.

Ungraded Assignments

Throughout the semester, you will receive several research, citation, and writing assignments that will not be formally graded. You must make a good faith effort on these assignments and complete them on time. If you fail to do either of these things, you may receive a grade penalty or receive an incomplete for the class.

Formatting Requirements

Unless instructed otherwise, all assignments must conform to these specifications:

- Times New Roman, 12-point type on white letter-size paper.
- Double space each page.
- One-inch margins on all sides.
- Place page numbers in the bottom center of each page.
- Print on one side only (if a hard copy is requested).
- Staple your paper in top left corner (if a hard copy is requested).
- Adhere to all other requirements stated in the instruction sheet.

Miscellaneous Class Administration

1. Please bring your charged laptop to each class. During certain class sessions, however, I may ask students to close their laptops and give their full attention. Please have pen and paper available for note-taking during every class period. The use of a computer or any other communication device in class for activities or purposes unrelated to the course causes a significant distraction for other students and severely disrupts the ability of students to participate fully in class. Therefore,

improper use of a computer during class (including, but not limited to, composing, sending, or reading emails; instant messaging; searching or browsing the Internet; playing games; and/or viewing movies) may, at my discretion, result in dismissal from the class session and/or a reduction in your final grade.

2. This Syllabus is subject to change upon notice in class and/or via Canvas postings and emails.
3. [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 this Syllabus.

Use of Generative AI

General. Generative artificial intelligence (“[Generative AI](#)”) 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](#)”). For example, two well-known LLMs 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 me, presented in a class session, or used in an oral or written graded assessment for this course.

Exceptions:

- You may use AI-Generated Text for exercises related to Generative AI when specifically permitted.
- You may use Generative AI as a study aid to help you understand material better. For example, you can ask an LLM to create additional examples of mandatory v. persuasive authority or to assist in your outline for the class. This does not include

creating any material that will be submitted as an assessment in the course.

Online Legal Research Training

Westlaw, Lexis and Bloomberg are the largest providers of online legal research services. Your future employers will expect you to be proficient in using these services, and as an added benefit, your proficiency will help you maximize research efforts for assignments in this course. Representatives from each provider will conduct training sessions during the semester, which I encourage you to attend.

University Resources

1. Legal Writing Center

You may obtain free individual tutoring through the Legal Writing Center (“Center”), which is located on the fourth floor of the Law Center Library in Room 413B. Several outstanding law students, known as Legal Writing Fellows (“Fellows”), staff the Center. They can help you with legal writing, research, and citation issues as well as style and usage questions. However, the Fellows are prohibited from assisting you with any graded assignment before you submit it.

You may email c_law_legal_writing_center@central.uh.edu using your UH email address to schedule an appointment with a Fellow. Drop-ins during weekly office hours are also welcome.

In lieu of the last week in class (as detailed in the Class Schedule), you will be required to attend one of three workshops hosted by the Legal Writing Center this semester. The workshop will take place outside of our regularly scheduled class time, and I will provide details as to time and place when available.

2. 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.

3. 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/>.

4. Title IX/Sexual Misconduct

Per the UHS 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 that 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 the following link: <https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/title-ix-sexual-misconduct/resources/>.

5. 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 CSAC’s Cougar Cupboard, all students can get up to 30 lbs. of FREE

groceries a week. Additionally, CSAC provides 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 CSAC's office and offers free clothes to students so that all Coogs can feel good in their fit. CSAC also hosts 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 it on Instagram: @uh_CSAC and @uhcupbrd. YOU belong here.

Recording of Class

Students may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without my prior written approval. 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. I may record certain classes, depending on student need. Students may use my recordings for their own studying and notetaking. My recordings are not authorized to be shared with anyone without my prior written approval. 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.