Syllabus for Spring 2024 Colloquium Course
University of Houston Law Center
Professor Renee Knake Jefferson
jeffersonrk@uh.edu

Course Description

The Colloquium is an attempt to create a cooperative scholarly enterprise in which students and faculty from other schools work collaboratively. Each week, the invited faculty speaker presents a work in progress to the class. Prior to class, students read the paper and come prepared to discuss and critique it. Students benefit from being exposed to scholarly analytic treatment and discussion of a subject in ways that few other, if any, law school classes provide.

We have a terrific lineup of speakers this semester (see list below). They range from established luminaries of the legal academy to a number of up and coming early-career stars. Although their topics will vary, all speakers will bring original and engaging perspectives. We meet as a group on Mondays from 11:50AM-2PM. When students want to meet to discuss a presenter's paper, I will also hold individual/small group sessions on Fridays from noon-1PM.

Five of our class meetings will be in person; the rest will be virtual. Details as to specific dates are below. Students may elect to take this course Pass/Fail. I will provide you with the required reading materials in advance of each week's meeting. Please note that this syllabus is a guide, not a contract, and is subject to change. Changes will be communicated via email.

Course Requirements/Grading

Weekly Summary Papers – 50%. Each week, students will submit brief summaries (no more than two pages, double-spaced) of the presented papers (total of 8 papers). These short submissions should show me that (1) you read the paper carefully and (2) have begun to think of questions or issues that it raises that you might ask or bring up in class. I will assess these papers based upon these categories (1) originality of thesis/argument; (2) persuasiveness and writing quality; (3) organization/flow of argument; and (4) overall quality of work submitted. They are due prior to the speaker's presentation and are worth, collectively, 40% of the final class grade.

Class Participation/Discussion (Your Questions/Comments) – 10%. This is one of my favorite things about the class; the dynamic is very positive and quite unlike what happens in most law school classrooms. Very often in law school, it seems to me, we say something to this effect: *We really want you to think and act and talk like a lawyer, but to do so you must think this specific way, and talk that exact way.* In teaching this class, I try to emphasize the value of independent thinking. There is not any exact prescription for what kind of questions you should ask (or comments you should offer). Obviously, be respectful, but that does not mean you can't disagree with or challenge the speaker. In terms of my expectations, I like to see people engaged in the discussion. That's the main thing; and it should go without saying (but I'll say it anyway) that quality is what matters, not quantity. It is far better to ask one very good question that shows you have thought about the work and have something to say or ask that furthers the discussion along. Class participation is worth the remaining 10% of your final class grade.

Long Paper – 40%. In addition to the short summary papers, students will write one long paper (of at least nine pages, double-spaced) that is due at the end of the semester on May1. The long paper is worth 40% of the final class grade. The longer paper must present an original thesis that touches on

at least two of the presenters' papers. The long paper offers an opportunity that does not come along frequently enough in law school. More commonly in law school, we ask students to regurgitate something back to us: *Give us the relevant facts; give us the holding; summarize the relevant authorities.* With the long paper, I am inviting you to think creatively; to come up with original ideas and points and then present those thoughts in a short, persuasive work. Think of these papers like a great book review. A great book review is worth reading because you learn something from reading it, even if you don't go on to read the book.

Here are some good rules of thumb to keep in mind as you write these papers:

1. I want you to use two or more of the presenters' papers in building your own thesis but try not to spend too long merely summarizing the arguments that others have made. That is the kind of traditional regurgitation work that you are usually asked to do. I would rather see you do more original analysis; summarizing someone else's work is just not nearly as original or interesting.
2. Focus your paper on an original idea that you come up with after having read and thought about the presenters' work. It can be about their subjects, but it could also be about something else the paper sparked, such as the methodological approach or what the author's framing choices.
3. Be careful not to take on too much with your thesis. Don't try to talk about some idea that is so big that you cannot adequately address it. If you do that, you run the risk of not being able to delve deeply into what you really want to say; the net result is a less persuasive work.
4. If you are going to ask critical questions of the presenters' work, you might think about framing them along one of these lines (though you should not try to address many or all of these in the same paper):
   - Are there flaws in the argument or methodology that warrant discussion?
   - Are there unjustified or incompletely defended assumptions in the argument?
   - Would changing any of the author's assumptions change the prescriptive arguments advanced?
   - Are there issues that the author does not address, or perspectives the authors did not consider, that should have been taken into account?
5. Finally, be sure to turn in a well-proofed copy: no typos, misspellings, etc. These are avoidable mistakes.

The website, www.jotwell.com, is another good source to consult as examples of the kind of what I am looking for. Finally, a last way to get a sense of what I'm looking for in the long paper is to read some prior student submissions. I will circulate several examples during our first week of class. The obvious limitation with these examples is that you are not reading the underlying work on which the student paper is based. That important caveat notwithstanding, seeing prior student work is likely to be very helpful to give you a sense about my expectations. Like the short papers, here are the categories that will be taken into account for grading the long papers: (1) originality of thesis/argument; (2) persuasiveness and writing quality; (3) organization/flow of argument; and (4) overall quality of work submitted.

Attendance and Participation
For Spring 2024, we currently have eight Monday speakers plus a ninth kick-off meeting. You should, of course, try to attend for all of these talks, but in any event you are expected to attend the kick-off

meeting and at least seven of the talks. I may lower a final grade or take other appropriate disciplinary action (up to entering a failing grade) if it is determined that a student is absent from more than two of the Monday talks. I count a student as absent if they are not in class for at least 75% of the scheduled class session.

My expectation as to virtual class attendance is that all students join with video on. If you know in advance that there's some reasonable reason why you do not want (or cannot) join with video, I expect you'll notify me in advance. Of course, there may be technical glitches from time to time; I understand that. But if it does, I do expect that you'll do your best to correct the problem before our next class. If you need help with any technical issues, let me know or reach out to our IT team by emailing them at lawcomputerhelp@central.uh.edu or calling (713) 743-2260.

Spring 2024 Schedule of Meetings and Speakers
1. Jan. 22—Kick-off - Introduction to the Course (in-person)
2. Jan 29—Andres Sawicki (in-person)
3. Feb 12—Chinelo Diké-Minor (Zoom)
4. Feb 19—Brandon Hasbrouck (Zoom)
5. Feb 26—Josh Sellers (Zoom)
6. March 4—Joseph Blocher (in-person)
7. March 25—Alexis Hoag-Fordjour (in-person)
8. April 1—Leah Litman (Zoom)
9. April 8—Jennifer Chacon (in-person)

Friday discussion dates (Zoom): 1/26, 2/9, 2/16, 2/23, 3/1, 3/22, 3/29, 4/5, 4/19
Final paper due May 1.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course, you will be able to:
-engage in assessment and critique of emerging scholarship in a range of legal fields;
-articulate and express well-informed opinions about emerging scholarship in a range of legal fields;
-communicate in writing and orally about ideas in legal scholarship; and
- demonstrate skills in legal analysis, reasoning, research; problem-solving; and written and oral communication in a range of legal fields.

Recording of Class
All presentations that are virtual will be recorded through Zoom. These recordings are not authorized to be shared with anyone without the prior written approval of the instructor. 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. 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. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Center for Students with DisABILITIES.

Contact Information and Office Hours
My email is jeffersonrk@uh.edu. My office hours are Fridays from 1-2 pm (via Zoom) and by appointment. My office at the Law Center is 342N.

Academic Support

For help with writing and studying generally, visit the Legal Writing Center. See http://www.law.uh.edu/lrw/legal-writing.asp.

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. 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 988lifeline.org. The State Bar also has an amazing group called Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program (web address is https://www.tlaphelps.org/). TLAP "provides confidential help for lawyers, law students and judges who have problems with substance abuse and/or mental health issues." Students can call (24 hours a day/7 days a week) to get help with mental health and substance abuse issues. The number is (800) 343-8527.

Chosen Names and Preferred Pronouns

In my classroom, you certainly have the right to be addressed by your preferred name and pronoun, and that includes any non-binary pronouns. Rosters do not list gender or pronouns so if you have specific preferences, please just let me know. You may call me Professor Jefferson.

Accessibility and Accommodations

UHLC is committed to ensuring that all students enjoy equal access and full participation. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on a disability (including any chronic or temporary medical or mental health condition), please feel free to reach out to me so that we may discuss options. If you require any support services, please contact the Center for Students with DisABILITIES. If you observe religious or cultural holidays that will coincide with synchronous class sessions, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we may make arrangements.

Anti-Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policies

UHLC and the University of Houston are committed to maintaining and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from discrimination and sexual misconduct. If you have experienced an incident of discrimination or sexual misconduct, a confidential reporting process is available to you. For more information, please refer to the University System's Anti-Discrimination Policy, available at https://uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/_docs/sam/01/1d7.pdf, and Sexual Misconduct Policy, available at https://uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/_docs/sam/01/1d8.pdf Please be aware that under the sexual misconduct policy, faculty and other University employees are required to report to the University any information received regarding sexual misconduct as defined in the policy. Due to this reporting requirement, faculty members and other employees are not a confidential resource. The

reporting obligations under the sexual misconduct policy extends to alleged conduct by University employees and students.

<div align="center">

UH Required Syllabus Provisions

</div>

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.

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/others 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. 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.