

# SUBJECT TO REVISION - POSTED OCTOBER 2025

## The “How to Reason” Course, Also Called Interdisciplinary Legal Reasoning

### Course Description

Three-Hour Course, Spring 2026 (LAW 5307 Section 19104)  
Professor Crump (dcrump@uh.edu, Office 341B; Office Hours By Appointment)

***How to Reason: The Course Content.*** This course will begin with a study of logic, including the logic of inferences and the logic of propositions. It will explore common fallacies and the limits of reasoning. Then it will go on to consider certain areas of economic, ethical, political, and jurisprudential reasoning. And it will cover certain other thinking tools that can be used to analyze the law.

The sources will range from Plato to Pareto, from Kant to Clausewitz, from Rawls to Russell, from Freud to Friedman, and from Adam and Eve to Adam Smith. You will study the fallacy of Bertrand Russell’s chicken, as well as game theorists’ analyses of the game of chicken. You will see how air conditioning works, how schizophrenia is diagnosed, and how General Norman Schwarzkopf initiated the invasion that began Desert Storm.

***But All Ideas Will Be Relevant to Legal Reasoning and Practice.*** In every instance, however, these ideas will have been selected because they can be tied to legal theories or public policy. For example, you will apply symbolic logic to the Supreme Court’s negative commerce clause jurisprudence and analyze punitive damages in light of market economics and ethical philosophy. You will study different political theories of liberty and equality, see how attribution theory affects jury persuasion, and consider what game theory can tell us about discovery in litigation. Even the air conditioning example will be related to the law, because it depends on a concept called entropy, which also has implications for enforcement of antitrust and criminal statutes.

***The Coursebook, Its Contents, and Reading Assignments: How to Reason by David Crump.*** The coursebook will be “How to Reason,” by David Crump, published by Lexis, but now republished in a new edition. A chapter-by-chapter outline of the book is included with this course description. The approximate length of the book is 500 pages, including illustrations and diagrams (but the pages are shorter because they are paperback pages). Reading assignments will be reasonable in length as compared to, e.g., such courses as Constitutional Law or Procedure I. The coursebook contains explanations of the subject areas together with sections called “Examples and Problems” that challenge the reader to put the subjects to work in common legal reasoning situations.

***Course Objectives: Why Take This Course?*** Ralph Nader once said that at the Harvard Law School, “they teach you how to be sharp by making you narrow.” This course is about how to think more deeply about the law. The principal objective is to sharpen reasoning processes without narrowing them. It is hoped that the course will assist students in the short run to better understand substantive courses, examination-taking, and legal reasoning generally. In the longer run, the objective is clearer thinking about choices in public policy, law and life.

***Methods and Course Administration: Two-Part Segments, Reading and Discussion, and***

**Examination.** In general, with some variations, each chapter will be treated by a series of two-part segments that will focus on understanding first, and then on analysis of problems. Classes will combine lecture, question-and-response methods, and Socratic dialogue. The reading will be neither excessively heavy nor unusually light, but it will be different from what is found in the usual law course. The grading will be by an examination. Past examination results have demonstrated that a traditional examination can produce reliable grade assignments.

**Innovative Structure: The Course Is Designed to Do Something Different.** It already has had several years of successful classes, but the student should realize that this is an innovative endeavor. That, after all, is the point: a different kind of course, one that adds something. It is important that the student approach the course with the attitude of an explorer trying something new.

**Student Evaluations of Past Offerings of the Course.** Student evaluations have been highly positive. Students tend to concur that day-to-day preparation is not heavy, but reasonable. Students do, however, report that studying for the exam is challenging because the course is different (that's the point of it, of course!)

## Some Questions and Answers

### About the How-To-Reason Course

**Q: Will I need to understand mathematics?**

*A: Yes, but only at the seventh or eighth grade level. The only necessary mathematical operations are addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, exponents, and conversion of fractions to decimals or percentages. Though necessary in a few instances, mathematical concepts are a very small part of the course, and they have been kept at a level that will be accessible to every law student.*

**Q: Will I be at a disadvantage compared to others who already have studied one or more of these subject areas?**

*A: It's unlikely. That just hasn't been a problem. Few students have mastered sufficiently large portions of the material to make any significant difference. Also, few students have studied the impact of the relevant subjects on legal reasoning.*

**Q: How exhaustive is the coverage of each of the subject areas?**

*A: Pretty basic. Each coverage is intended to give you a feel for the fields considered and to increase your reasoning capacity. In each instance, the book explores selected issues. It isn't a treatise. That's because the course doesn't aim to make anyone into an accomplished logician, social psychologist, political scientist, statistician or game theoretician, but rather to use ideas from these fields to sharpen legal reasoning.*

**Q: Will I need to learn technical concepts?**

*A: In some cases. There will be a few concepts that few students have heard of, like Arrow's Theorem in political science, propositional calculus in logic, the alpha value in statistics, and the iterated prisoner's dilemma in game theory. But all of these concepts will be carefully explained in lay persons' terminology. The point of every course, after all, is to learn something new, and besides, every one of these concepts is more interesting than, say, springing executory interests or supplemental jurisdiction, and none of them is any more difficult.*

**Q: Will the Professor really know something about all these different areas?**

*A: "Something" is the correct way to put it. Nobody is truly an expert in all of these fields. But the idea behind the course is sound, and if there is to be such a course, somebody's got to teach it. But then, that's actually the way it is with every law professor teaching every law school course! And actually I've taught the course enough times to be able to organize and explain it effectively.*

**Q: Will the course will be unusually difficult?**

*A: No. It will be about average in difficulty.*

**Q: Most law school books don't have pictures. Are there any pictures in the How-to-Reason book?**

*A: Yes, indeed. Of all kinds of folks, from Plato to Carol Gilligan (she's a psychologist who inspired the feminist jurisprudence movement). And there are charts, graphs, and figures, ranging from a depiction of Judge Learned Hand's economics-based negligence definition to a game theory payoff matrix for the Battle of the Bismarck Sea. This is going to be an interesting course.*

**Q: What is going to make it interesting?**

*A: Relative to law courses generally, it might even be fun. For instance, did you know that there was a method of deductive inference named Barbara? It's in Chapter 1. Or, have you ever considered the logical structure of a joke? See Chapter 2. We could go on, but suffice it to say that paradox, humor, and strange implications abound. At the same time, it's all aimed at sharpening your reasoning.*

**Q: What about the course book?**

*A. It was published by LEXIS/NEXIS, one of the largest book publishers. It now is republished in a second edition, just updated. It doesn't have cases in it, although it confronts legal problems throughout. It's a different kind of book, unlike other law school books, but it's aimed at law schools and it's targeted to this specific kind of course. LEXIS/NEXIS had faith in this project and concluded that the book will add something important to your law school education.*

**Q: What is in the book?**

*A. The next page of this announcement is the chapter-by-chapter table of contents. The subjects range from ethics to game theory, and from rhetoric to scientific method. The best way to get a quick, one-page sense of the course is probably to read this table of contents.*

# UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYLLABUS LANGUAGE: 2026

## Required Language for Courses with a Face-to Face Component

### 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](http://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](https://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](mailto:jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU).

## 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.

## Law Center Required Language

### 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/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 of 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.

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# Syllabus and Class Plan

## Interdisciplinary Legal Reasoning

### Professor Crump, Spring 2026

<u>Class No.</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Read through page no.</u>	<u>Rough Est. No. Pages</u>
1	logic	20 (end of “So, How Many Syllogisms”)	19
2	logic	34 (end of Chapter 1)	15
	[Last section, 1.04, is difficult; you’ll have to work through slowly.]		
3	fallacy	57 (end of § 2.02)	22
4	fallacy-economics	86 (end of [A], Markets etc.)	24
	[Section 2.04, Limits of Logic, will be considered only briefly.]		
5	economics I	end of Chapter 3	20
	[Section 3.04 Macroeconomics, is difficult. I’ll try to make sense.]		
6	economics II	133 (end of [C], Externalities)	25
7	economics-finance	157 (end of [C], Use of Judgment)	20
8	finance-management	182 (end of [A], Organizational Management)	24
9	management	201 (end of Chapter 6)	19
	[Section 6.04, Other Aspects, will be considered only briefly.]		
10	ethics	228 (end of Rawls)	24
	[Pp. 204-09, Historical, and 214-16, Dialectical, will be considered only briefly.]		
11	ethics-politics	251 (end of § 8.02)	21
12	politics	277 (end of Chapter 8)	23
	[Pp. 267-69, Pluralism/Elitism, and 277-78, Freedom/Equality: only briefly.]		
13	science	305 (end of [A], Scientific Method)	19
	[Pp. 294-301, Thermodynamics, is difficult. I’ll try to make sense.]		
14	science-jurisprudence	After science chapter, skip to 519; read to 526 (end of Examples & Problems)	21
15	jurisprudence	546 (end of Chapter 16)	21
16	psychology	Go back to 321; read to 344 (end of § 10.04)	23
	[Section 11.04, Etiology, and 11.05, Intelligence: only briefly.]		
17	psychology-probabilities	After psychology chapter, skip to 389; read to 394 (end of Examples & Problems)	21
18	probabilities	414 (end of Chapter 12)	21
	[Section 12.04, Interval Distribution, is difficult. I’ll try to make sense.]		
19	statistics	431 (end of [B], Correlations)	16
20	statistics	458 (end of Chapter 13)	21
	[The entire chapter is difficult, but important. Omit Problems at 454-55 and 456-57.]		
21	game theory	478 (end of § 14.04)	18
22	game theory I-II	497 (end of [A], Coordination & Mixed)	19
23	game theory II	517 (end of Chapter 15)	20
	[Section 15.04, Multi-Person, is difficult. I’ll try to make sense.]		
24	communications	376 (end of § 16.02)	16
25	communications	388 (end of Chapter 13)	10