

University of Houston Law Center  
**Voir Dire – The Art of Juror Deselection**  
Course #19120  
Wednesdays 5:30PM – 7:30PM

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**Professors:** Judge Christine Weems  
Sepi Zimmer

**Required Text:** None.

**Recommended Text:** Dodge, Angela M., *Winning at Jury Selection: A Handbook of Practical Jury-Focused Techniques and Strategies*, Dodge Consulting & Publications, 2010.

**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Email:** Email is the best way to contact your professors.

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**Prerequisite:** Trial Advocacy or instructor approval

**Course Description, Learning Description & Goals:**

The most important part of any trial is picking your jury - the audience that will hear your presentation and ultimately decide your case. In this class, the students will learn about the psychology as well as the law behind choosing a jury for any kind of case. Through practical exercises as well as a study of the applicable legal principles and case law, the class will learn techniques to try to get the panel talking so you can get the information you need from jurors to determine whether they will be a good fit for your case, how to properly strike for cause and preserve error as well as the best way to use peremptory strikes to ultimately try to get the best panel possible. The class will end with the students doing a full voir dire as well as closing arguments with the opportunity to watch jury deliberations to see how the panel they ended up with impacted the decision that was made.

**Learning Outcomes:**

During your time in this course, you will develop the ability to confidently and competently examine a venire panel on relevant issues, exercise strikes for cause as well as peremptory strikes and gain an understanding of the practical aspects of jury selection as well as the psychology involved in making your strikes.

**Attendance:**

You should attend all class sessions and arrive on time. The UHLC attendance policy requires attendance at 80% of all scheduled (or makeup) classes or a student risks being dropped from the course. Attendance may be taken at each class.

Please note that you are responsible for managing your absences from class and ensuring that your total number of absences does not exceed 20%. If you have to miss a class, please inform your professors beforehand so that they can adjust the counseling pairings accordingly.

**Grading:**

To the extent there are any assignments that require a writing to be turned in, that writing may be emailed by the assigned due date. Additional specific instructions regarding how to turn in each assignment will also be provided in class.

Over the course of the semester, students will be required to bring volunteers to class – sometimes in person, sometimes over zoom. Failure to bring any volunteers to class for either assignments or the final examinations could negatively affect the student’s class participation grade if there is no explanation for the failure.

Your grade will be based on the following components:

- 25% Class Participation – This component is based on (1) showing up and (2) participating in class discussion in a productive and involved way.
- 20% Skill Evaluation
- 15% Class Exercises
- 40% Final Exam – voir dire, trial and jury deliberation

**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 in a non-proctored environment, such as a “take-home” final examination unless specified as an exception below.

## **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.

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](http://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).

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, 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](mailto: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.

### **Syllabus Changes:**

Please note that the instructor may need to make modifications to the course syllabus. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through email.

**Tentative Schedule:**

- Class 1 (01/21) Course Introduction  
Twelve Angry Jurors
- Class 2 (01/28) Bring your friends to class day!  
Simulated voir dire – You will be required to bring at least 2 friends to class.
- Class 3 (02/04) Identifying the Jurors you Want (and Don't Want)
- Class 4 (02/11) Different Ways to Get the Same Information from the Venire
- Class 5 (02/18) Class Exercise  
Figuring out your voir dire style
- Class 6 (02/25) Strikes for Cause (*Cortez* and *Hyundai*)  
Preservation of Error
- Class 7 (03/04) Peremptory Strikes  
Interpreting Juror Cards  
Using jury questionnaires  
Notetaking during voir dire
- Class 8 (03/11) Class Exercise  
The Intangibles – The Psychology of Jurors  
Implicit and explicit bias
- NO CLASS ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2023  
SPRING BREAK
- Class 9 (03/25) Jury Selection-Related Motions  
(Jury Shuffle/Re-apportion Strikes/*Batson* Challenges)
- Class 10 (04/01) Class Exercise with live jurors over zoom
- Class 11 (04/08) Jury consultants
- Class 12 (04/15) Second class exercise with live jurors over zoom
- Class 13 (04/22) Preparing for the Final Voir Dire

Finals are scheduled individually.