

WELL-BEING IN THE LAW (6353/25294) SPRING 2026
PROFESSOR LONNY HOFFMAN AND KATY LEA CANNON

Course satisfies UHLC's experiential course requirement. If you do not need the experiential credit, the course can be taken pass-fail

FOR PROFESSOR HOFFMAN:
OFFICE: 340A; OFFICE PHONE: (713) 743-5206
EMAIL: LHOFFMAN@UH.EDU

Updated October 8, 2025

INTRODUCTORY NOTE ABOUT THE PASS/FAIL (SATISFACTORY/UNSATISFACTORY) GRADE OPTION

This course satisfies UHLC's experiential course requirement. However, if you do not need the experiential credit (because you have taken or plan to earn the required credits in other ways), then this course can be taken on a pass/fail basis and I would strongly encourage you to consider doing so.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES, AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course rigorously explores the challenges to well-being facing law students and legal professionals and the opportunities available for overcoming those challenges. The class's animating framing is around mindfulness training. Because mindfulness is such a widely used term, it may have different meanings to you so it's important for us to clarify the type of mindfulness we'll be practicing. The most important thing to say now is that our central objective is to guide students to greater awareness of how their minds work and to feel how clearer awareness can be a path to more sustainable well-being.

This is a highly experiential class and it may not be right for some students. It pairs traditional with nontraditional learning modalities. The former includes reading assignments, short written reflections, and group discussions. Though these learning experiences may be familiar, the expectations around student engagement may not be. The benefits students can gain from this class depend, in large measure, on everyone's willingness to listen and participate with openness. This means that you must agree to try to co-create a space that allows for shared vulnerability. If you are not willing to make that commitment, then this class is not right for you.

In addition to these traditional learning experiences, you'll also learn through nontraditional modalities that emphasize active learning. These include guided mindfulness practices both in and outside of the classroom, active practice of mindful communication techniques, field engagement work in which you will be teaching what you've learned to others, and weekly slow movement practices, including some guided yoga. The latter will not involve vigorous exercise. Instead, we'll practice primarily in the yin style of yoga that targets deep connective tissues, such as fascia, ligaments, and joints through long holds in various floor-based shapes with extensive use of props to target opening and release of tension. The benefits of this form of practice aren't just physical; they directly link to the mindfulness practices you'll be learning.

This class is open to anyone, regardless of physical condition or ability, and no prior experience with mindfulness practice is required. However, before enrolling you should consult with the instructors if you (1) have experienced a recent significant trauma or have been diagnosed with a serious mental

health disorder, such as schizophrenia, psychosis, or obsessive compulsive disorder, for which you are not contemporaneously receiving professional help; (2) are in active recovery from substance abuse; or (3) experience chronic pain and are not contemporaneously working with a health care professional to address your condition. This class is not a substitute for therapy and neither instructor is licensed to offer therapeutic services.

If you are open to a new way of learning that could help you find a path to more durable well-being, read on.

GRADING

I have already encouraged you to take the class pass-fail if you do not need the experiential credit. As for assessment, we use several different components:

Class Engagement. Part of your grade will be based on your constructive engagement with this class. Although this is more commonly referred to as class participation, we believe engagement is a better term and the modifier is important. *Constructive* engagement certainly does not turn on the number of times that a student speaks. Active listening is just as important as speaking and, ultimately, the quality of your engagement with this course is what matters, which is we are allocating 15% of the final grade for this element.

Short Reflective Papers. You will write three short, non-anonymous reflective papers (usually no more than two to four typed, double-spaced pages). Assignments will be noted in the syllabus and you'll get more detailed guidance so everyone can know what is expected of them and how they'll be evaluated. The short papers, collectively, are worth 15% of the final grade.

Presentation and Longer Paper. Students will also do a presentation about their field assignment. As discussed below in the syllabus (and we'll cover this in much more detail in class), the field assignment is near the end of the semester. Students will teach some aspect of what they've learned in the course to others and then do a presentation to the entire class on their learning experience from this assignment. The presentation is worth 20% of the final grade. Finally, students will write one longer non-anonymous paper based on the topic that they chose for their field assignment. This paper should be between 8-10 typed, double-spaced pages. It is due by no later than Saturday, May 2 at 5:00 pm. As with the short reflective papers and the presentations, we will separately provide more detailed guidance as to the expected content of the long paper and how it will be evaluated. The long paper is worth 50% of the final grade.

CLASS MEETING TIME AND ATTENDANCE POLICY

This class meets in-person once a week on Fridays, from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm. As required by UHLC rules and by this syllabus, you must attend at least 80% of the scheduled classes. If you are absent for more than 20% of the classes, you may receive a lower grade (in extreme cases, that may even include a failing grade for the class). Finally, note that virtual participation through Zoom is not an option for this class.

COURSE MATERIALS

There is no required text to buy for this class. We will provide the course reading materials for you without charge.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND OFFICE HOURS

Professor Hoffman's office (340A) is in the faculty suites on the third floor. My office hours are Mondays from 1-4 pm. With advance notice, I'm available to meet in person but meetings can also be by Zoom. You are also welcome to meet outside of office hours. Just call or email in advance to schedule an appointment. Professor Hoffman's office phone is (713) 743-5206; his email is lhoffman@uh.edu. His assistant is Jeremy Tidell. His phone is (713) 743-1579; email is jltidwe3@central.uh.edu. Katy Lea Cannon's contact information will be provided when the semester begins.

USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PROGRAMS LIKE CHATGPT

We're sure you are aware that there have been significant advances in generative artificial intelligence programs, such as ChatGPT. You are also surely aware that this is a developing technology and that there are already plenty of sobering stories of people who later regretted relying on AI. *See, e.g., Sara Merken, New York Lawyers Sanctioned for Using Fake ChatGPT Cases in Legal Brief, June 26, 2023, available [here](#).* That said, we also want to emphasize that no one needs to use AI and that for this class, it may be an especially ill-advised idea. While it might seem to you to be efficient in the short run (but see our earlier warning), we are confident that you'll gain more valuable insights into your own well-being if you fully engage with the very personal assignments we've constructed for this class. In any event, if you do decide to use GenAI, here's the class policy on using it: you can use any GenAI program for any reason, subject to your acknowledgement of the two points listed below.

For any assignment that you submit in this class, if you use GenAI to complete that assignment, in whole or in part:

1. You must let us know if you relied on GenAI for all or part of any paper that you submit. You can do this just by including a line with your submission noting that you used a GenAI program. (Again, we don't prohibit your use of it and your grade won't be negatively affected in any way by your disclosure that you used it. We just want to know you did so we can better track student use of GenAI over time, which should help us better counsel students in the future.)
2. In submitting an assignment for which you used GenAI, you acknowledge you'll be graded as if you had written it yourself and that any errors will be treated as your errors.

SUPPORT

At the Law Center, in the broader university, and through the State Bar, there are a number of different sources of support if you need it.

1. Of course, you are always welcome to come see either of the course instructors. But, if you'd rather talk to someone else, Dean Monica Mensah in Student Services is another

resource. She's been helping students for many years. Her office is located in the Office of Student Services. Email is mebuckne@central.uh.edu; her phone is (713) 743-6247.

2. The university's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help students who are having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to the demands of a professional program, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS (www.uh.edu/caps) by calling (713) 743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or someone you know is in crisis. No appointment is necessary for the "Let's Talk" program, a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus. Their webpage can be accessed here: http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html.
3. The State Bar runs 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 (24/7) to get help with mental health and substance abuse issues. The number is (800) 343-8527.

In addition, there are four other resources that I know less about. The university asks that we share this information with you (the language below is required by the university):

4. 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.
5. The A.D. Bruce Religion Center offers spiritual support and a variety of programs centered on well-being.
6. 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.
7. 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.

CHOSEN NAMES AND PREFERRED PRONOUNS

In our 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 us know.

INCLUSION

This is an inclusive learning space: all are welcome. If you ever feel that the classroom experience is not comfortable, please reach out to us and we'll try to address your concerns. If you feel more comfortable speaking with someone else, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs Student Services Monica Mensah is an excellent resource (contact info above). Finally, you can also bring any issues relating to the Law Center's openness to inclusion to the Law Center's Diversity and Inclusion Committee. You can contact the committee directly at UHLCD&I@uh.edu.

RECORDING OF CLASS

[THE PARAGRAPH BELOW IS UNIVERSITY-REQUIRED LANGUAGE]

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.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

[THE FIRST PARAGRAPH BELOW IS UNIVERSITY-REQUIRED LANGUAGE]

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.

If you require any support services, you may contact Ms. Samantha Ary, Academic Records Coordinator. Ms. Ary is located in in the Office of Student Services suite, and she can be reached at sary@central.uh.edu or (713) 743-7466. Requests for accommodation that involve graded assignments must be directed to Ms. Ary and should be made as soon as possible to allow adequate time to document and to process the request. If you observe religious or cultural holidays that will coincide with synchronous class sessions or conferences, please let either instructor know as soon as possible, so that we may make arrangements.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICIES
[THE PARAGRAPH BELOW IS UNIVERSITY-REQUIRED LANGUAGE]

UHLC and the University of Houston are committed to maintaining and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment in which 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 webpage, Anti-Discrimination Policy, Sexual Misconduct Policy webpage, and Sexual Misconduct Policy. Under the University 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/>.

HONOR CODE
[THE PARAGRAPH BELOW IS UHLC-REQUIRED LANGUAGE]

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.

The course syllabus follows on the next page.

COURSE SYLLABUS

Class #1: Friday, January 23 9:00–10:15 am: Introduction to Course: class goals, learning objectives, expectations and requirements 10:30–11:45 am: Introduction to slow movement practices: centered breathing, neck and wrist stretches, eye exercises. Reflections on experience.	In advance of this class: Listen to Days 1 and 2 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up app. (Instructions for accessing the app will be sent before semester. If you have any problems accessing the app, let me know and I'll reach out to their customer support team.) Reading/listening assignment. (1) Read my recent paper, <i>An Essay on Teaching Well-Being in the Law</i> available, for now, here: https://www.law.uh.edu/faculty/lhoffman/2024/procedure/wellbeing.pdf; (2) listen to the conversation segment (which is about thirty minutes long) called <i>The Science of Mindfulness—Part I</i> between Dr. Jonas Kaplan and Sam Harris. (I found it most easily by going to the “Explore” button on the bottom of the app, then clicking on the “Theory” tab at the top, and typing the word “science” in the search box.); and (3) read <i>The Self-Transforming Brain</i> by Rick Hanson, available here: https://s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/wisebrain.org/WiseBrainBulletin/wbb3_10.pdf. Although we aren't requiring that you prepare or submit anything after doing this reading/listening assignment, you might get more out of our first class together if you reflect on what you've taken away from these three assignments. For instance, you could talk with a family member or friend about what these assignments suggest you might be learning in the course. Note: Short reflection paper on early mindfulness experience – due before Feb 6 class. Separate email will be sent with guidance for the reflection paper. This assignment is one of the graded short reflection paper assignments. The short papers, collectively, are worth 15% of your final grade.
--	--

Class #2: Friday, January 30 9:00–10:15 am: Stage setting conversation on recurring thematic issues relating to well-being challenges in the law. 10:30–11:45 pm: Slow movement practice. Reflections on experience.	In advance of this class: Read Levin, The Kids Aren't Alright, (read only pages 10-30) Listen to Days 3 and 4 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up App
Class #3: Friday, February 6 9:00–10:15 am: Mindful Communication 10:30–11:45 am: Slow movement practice. Reflections on experience.	In advance of this class: Listen to Days 5 and 6 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up App Watch this 12-minute video that provides a brief introduction to Nonviolent Communication, available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mdxyYyk2JU Read <i>Nonviolent Communication in the Workplace: Principles and Best Practices</i> by Nati Beltran, available here: https://www.natibeltran.com/thecomplete-guide-to-nonviolent-communicationfor-purpose-driven-leaders/
Class #4: Friday, February 13 9:00–10:15 am: Mindful Communication 10:30–11:45 am: Slow movement practice. Reflections on experience.	In advance of this class: Listen to Days 7 and 8 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up App Reading assignment: TBD

Class #5: Friday, February 20 9:00–10:15 am: Mindful Communication 10:30–11:45 am: Slow movement practice. Reflections on experience.	In advance of this class: Listen to Days 9 and 10 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up App Reading assignment: TBD Homework Assignment: Short reflection paper on retirement speech – due before Friday, March 6 class. Rest of assignment TBD
Class #6: Friday, February 27 9:00–10:15 am: Mindful Practices in Daily Living. 10:30–11:45 am: Slow movement practice. Reflections on experience.	In advance of this class: Listen to Days 11 and 12 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up App Reading assignment: TBD
Class #7: Friday, March 6 9:00–10:15 am: Mindfulness in Stillness practices. 10:30–11:45 am: Slow movement practice. Reflections on experience.	In advance of this class: Listen to Days 13 and 14 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up App Reading assignment: TBD
Class #8: Friday, March 13 9:00–10:15 am: Mindfulness in Stillness practices. 10:30–11:45 am: Slow movement practice. Reflections on experience.	In advance of this class: Listen to Days 15 and 16 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up App Reading assignment: TBD
Class #9: Friday, March 27 9:00–10:15 am: Mindfulness in Stillness practices. 10:30–11:45 am: Slow movement practice. Reflections on experience.	In advance of this class: Listen to Days 17 and 18 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up App Reading assignment: TBD

Class #10: Friday, April 3 9:00–10:15 am: Prep for service week. More details about this assignment to be provided. 10:30–11:45 am: Slow movement practice. Reflections on experience.	In advance of this class: Listen to Days 19 and 20 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up App
Class #11: Friday, April 10 Service week.	In advance of this class: Listen to Days 21 and 22 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up App
Class #12: Friday, April 17 Student presentations. Students will give presentations describing their teaching experience in the field. More details about this assignment to be provided.	In advance of this class: Listen to Days 23 and 24 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up App
Class #13: Friday, April 24 Complete student presentations. Students will give presentations describing their teaching experience in the field. More details about this assignment to be provided.	In advance of this class: Listen to Days 25 and 26 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up App
Class #14: Friday, May 1 9:00–10:15 am: Wrap up: lessons learned. 10:30–11:45 am: Restorative yoga/sound bath	In advance of this class: Listen to Days 27 and 28 of the Introductory Course on the Waking Up App Final paper due Monday, May 4 by 5:00 pm