

LAW 5242: Intermediate Legal Research
2 credits

Course Info	Contact Info	Student Hours
Intermediate Legal Research Mondays, 8:30-10:30am OR Mondays, 1:00-3:00pm Room: TBD	Alyson Drake (both sections) Dani Esquivel (AM section) Rob Brownell (PM section) adrake2@central.uh.edu Office: 421E in the Law Library (ask for me at the Circulation Desk & they'll direct you)	I maintain an open-door policy, so please feel free to stop by anytime. Drop-in Hours: TBD I'm also available by appointment, so please contact me to make an appointment if the above hours don't work.

Welcome to Intermediate Legal Research

We're so glad you're here! We look forward to working with you this semester to improve your research and analysis skills. Attorneys spend approximately 35% of their time on legal research, so the goal of this course is to help you be practice-ready from day one.

This class may feel a little different from a lot of the other classes you've taken. The first reason is that this is a simulation course, focusing on learning by doing. In each class, you'll simulate work you could do as a practicing attorney. Sometimes, this makes this class seem like more work, but really it's just a different type of work than you're doing in many of your other courses. The second reason is this course is designed on principles of learning science to help you retain your new knowledge and skills in the long term. As such, we may do some activities that feel different from other courses.

How to Succeed in Intermediate Texas Legal Research

Every student can succeed in this class, because legal research is a skill everyone improves at with effort and practice. Here are a few tips that will help you succeed:

1. **Be professional.** Come to class on time, with all the materials you need ready to go. Turn in your best work, on time, every time. Participate actively in all class discussions and activities. Remember your classmates are your future colleagues; treat them accordingly. All members of this class should feel supported, respected, and included.
2. **Be positive.** Legal research is difficult. In Intermediate Legal Research, you'll likely encounter research that differs from other research you've done before. Just like anyone learning new skills, you'll stumble at times. Embrace your mistakes. Learn from them. The more you practice your research, the better you're getting at it.

3. **Be present.** Attendance is required. Because we have so much material to cover, more than 2 unexcused absences will result in a deduction to your final grade. *However, I understand that things can and will come up.* Just be communicative and email ahead of class if you can.
 4. **Be proactive.** This is a professional environment, which means you must take responsibility for your learning. I'm always happy to answer questions, but despite my best efforts, I can't always tell when a student has questions or concerns if they don't share them with me. *So if you need help, please ask. That's what I'm here for.*
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Learning Objectives/What Will You Be Learning?

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Design a successful research strategy, including selecting appropriate sources, creating effective searches, and refining your strategy when needed;
 - Critically select and efficiently locate the most appropriate sources for a research problem, considering time, cost, and availability of resources;
 - Evaluate relevance and reliability of information, including its authority, credibility, currency, and authenticity;
 - Confirm and validate your research results; and
 - Summarize and consolidate your research findings and communicate them orally and in writing.
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First and Foremost

Basic Needs Statement

We learn as whole people. To learn effectively you must first have security: a roof over your head, a safe place to sleep, enough food to eat. If you're having trouble with any of these, please talk with me or with the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. Together we can make sure those needs are met.

Mental Health & Wellness

The last few academic years have been unprecedented in many ways, making learning more collectively difficult than ever before. Many of us are working and learning from places of anxiety, uncertainty, an awareness of social injustice, anger, and trauma. I do not, nor do I expect you to be, immune from the challenges so many are facing. I also acknowledge some people in our community are more impacted than others. If you're struggling, please feel free to come speak to me if you feel comfortable or I can help connect you with other useful 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.

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.

Additional Student Resources

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.

The Women & 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.

Anti-Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policies

UHLC and the University 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](#).

Per 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/>.

What Course Tools Will You Need?

Textbook: There is no required textbook for this course.

Laptops: Please bring a laptop with you to each class session; we will be regularly using online subscription databases and web resources, so a laptop is necessary to participate fully in class activities. A phone isn't a sufficient substitute for a laptop in this class.

Canvas: All course materials will be housed on Canvas. Materials for each week can be found in the Weekly Materials folder; within that, materials for each week will be in a module named for that week (ex. Week 1 (Date): Topic). You will also submit assignments via Canvas.

Email: I'll communicate with you regularly by emails sent out through Canvas. Email is a huge part of legal practice, so it's crucial that you get in the habit of frequently checking your email now. Likewise, if you email me, I will get back to you within 24 hours, usually much sooner.

How Will I Be Assessed?

1. **In-Class Exercises:** In every class, students will complete and turn in in-class exercises practicing using the sources, skills, and strategies discussed during the semester. These will be graded for completion and good faith effort and so I can see what skills, sources, and strategies require continued practice. **If students miss a class session, they must complete the in-class exercises and turn them in before the next class session to get credit for those exercises.**
2. **Research Problem Sets:** In some weeks of class, you will be completing short problem sets to reinforce the same skills and strategies we practiced during that week's class.

3. **Mini-AI Moments:** In each week of class, you will be completing short problem sets to explore the usefulness of AI research tools for specific research tasks. These will often, but not always, be combined with research problem sets so you can see how the tools compare.
4. **Research Assessments:** There will be three longer assessments, in which you will use the sources, skills, and strategies we've discussed over the course of the semester to do more in-depth research. Each of these larger assessments will be comprised of some or all of the following components:
 - preliminary analysis of legal issues;
 - efficiently locating and analyzing appropriate legal sources;
 - logging the research;
 - reflecting on the research process; and
 - summarizing and communicating the research orally and/or in writing.
5. **Reflections, Pre-Class Work, and Participation:** For some class sessions, there will be pre-class readings/videos to prepare to engage in in-class activities. In most weeks, there will be a short set of reflections questions on course content that must be completed following the class session. I will also monitor weekly preparedness and participation by ability to engage in in-class activities, asking and answering questions during lectures and in-class assignments, contributing to class discussions, engaging fully during in-class exercises, showing up on time with all materials ready to go. You can also show participation by asking questions outside of class/visiting office hours if you feel more comfortable participating in those environments.

How Will I Be Graded?

Course grades are determined by performance on the following:

- Problem Sets/Mini-AI Moments: 25%
- Assessment #1: 15%
- Assessment #2: 20%
- Assessment #3: 30%
- In-class exercises, pre-class work, and participation: 10%

Please note: If you have chosen to take this class satisfactory/unsatisfactory, please note: each and every assignment that appears in Canvas must be completed **on-time with a good faith effort** to receive a satisfactory grade in this course. In other words, you cannot pass this course unless you turn in everything with the intent to pass each assignment.

UH Required Language & Policies

Attendance:

UHLC requires students to attend 80% of classes. The instructor will take attendance at the start of each class using the seating chart; multiple instances of tardiness may equal an absence.

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.

Syllabus Changes

Please note that the instructor may need to make modifications to the course syllabus and may do so at any time. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through Canvas.

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 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 students, 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 prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recording will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

AI Policy

Subject to the exceptions immediately below, your continuing enrollment in this course constitutes your pledge not to generate or to use any AI-Generated Work Product—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 the instructor, presented in a class session, or used in an oral or written graded assessment for this course.

Exceptions the following:

You may use generative AI for any assignments where you are explicitly directed to use generative AI to conduct legal research

You may generate and use AI-Generated Work Product for class preparation, although you must disclose the full extent of that use if your instructor asks. You may generate and use AI-Generated Work Product for study supplements to aid with general understanding of course content, generation of diagrams or flow charts, “gamification” of course content, flash cards for student, or sample questions and answers.

You may generate and use AI-Generated Work Product for an outline that summarizes course content.

You may use AI-Generated Work Product to check your originally drafted text for misspellings, grammar and punctuation errors, strength and clarity of prose, verbosity, effective transitional language and thesis sentences, word choice, excessive passive voice, and like things.

You may use AI-Generated Work Product for the purpose of language translation.
