

# U.S. Legal Skills | Fall 2026

Professor Katherine Brem

**About Me.** Welcome to Lawyering Skills and Strategies. As a first-generation college and law school graduate, I know that law school can sometimes feel like a world with its own language, customs, and unwritten rules. My goal is to help you develop the skills and confidence to navigate that world successfully while learning to think, write, and advocate like a lawyer.

Before joining the faculty at the University of Houston Law Center, I practiced commercial litigation at Baker Botts LLP, focusing on oil and gas disputes, catastrophic personal injury defense, and complex business litigation. I have taught legal writing and advocacy at UH Law for more than seventeen years.

Outside the classroom, I am the proud mother of twin daughters, an avid OrangeTheory enthusiast, and a devoted coffee drinker. My door is always open, and I enjoy helping students navigate both law school and the legal profession.

**Course Objectives.** U.S. Legal Skills is a one-week orientation course that prepares foreign-trained lawyers for legal education in the United States. By taking this course, you can expect to master the following course objectives:

1. Understand fundamental legal English terminology.
2. Understand concepts of professionalism distinctive to the study and practice of law in the United States.
3. Understand the sources, hierarchy, and precedential value of U.S. law.
4. Distinguish different types of legal rules, dissect legal rules into their essential components, and synthesize a unified rule of law from disparate sources.
5. Understand the procedure and process for interpreting and enforcing laws in the United States.
6. Understand the way principles of law are taught in the United States.
7. Understand study habits and standard tools beneficial to mastering the study of law in the United States.

**Textbooks.** No textbook is required for this course. Instead, I will provide supplemental reading materials free of charge on Canvas, our course management system.

**Assessment.** This course is graded on a pass/fail basis. To pass, you must be prepared for class each day; complete all daily assignments on time, using your best efforts; and achieve a passing grade on a final exam that will assess your mastery of legal terminology; the sources and components of U.S. legal rules; critical reading skills; fundamental legal analysis; and principles of professionalism.

**Honor Code.** The UHLC Honor Code will apply to each assignment. This means that you may NOT work together on any assignments for this class unless I instruct otherwise. You may not plagiarize another's work. You may not share your work with another student. For more information about the UHLC Honor Code, please consult the code.

**Using Generative Artificial Intelligence.** As technology develops to address issues of confidentiality, more and more lawyers will turn to generative artificial intelligence ("gen-AI") to improve efficacy

and efficiency. Though we may discuss the use of gen-AI in this course, I ask that you not use gen-AI to complete any course assignments, as this will adversely impact the educational value of this course to you.

**Office Hours.** Contact me in person (Room 341M), via email ([kbrem@central.uh.edu](mailto:kbrem@central.uh.edu)), or on Teams (713.743.5945). I will hold office hours each day by appointment. Simply stop into my office or call me on Teams at the appointed hour.

**Honor Code.** The UHLC Honor Code applies to 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 this course. Your continuing enrollment in this course is deemed to be a pledge by you to comply with the Honor Code and to comply with the instructions in the course syllabus. For more information on the UHLC Honor Code, please consult the code itself, [available at this link](#).

**Attendance | Class Administration.** This class will meet in person August 10 – 14, from 8 a.m. until 10:30 a.m., in room 310. Students should sign the official attendance sheet each day before the end of class. If you forget to sign in, please send an email immediately to Nazanin Salehi, [nsalehi2@Central.uh.edu](mailto:nsalehi2@Central.uh.edu), who will update the attendance roll. Any student who fails to adhere to the course attendance policy will be referred to the Office of Student Affairs.

Be prepared to discuss the lecture material that I assign for each class. I will call on you at random. If you are unprepared for class, please email me before class to let me know.

**The Fine Print. 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 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 [this website](#), calling (713) 743-5400, or emailing [jdcenter@Central.uh.edu](mailto:jdcenter@Central.uh.edu).

We ask also that you contact Samantha Ary, Academic Records Coordinator at the Law Center. Ms. Ary's office is in the Office of Student Services suite. She can be reached by [email](#) or at (713) 743-7466. Requests for accommodation that involve graded assignments should be directed to Ms. Ary as soon as possible to allow adequate time to process the request. She can assist you as you navigate the Dart Center process.

**Class Recordings.** I will record classes and post links to these recordings on the class web course as soon as they are available. You may use these recordings for your own studying and notetaking purposes, but please do not share them with anyone. University policy mandates that an 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.

**Food Insecurity.** The Cougar Cupboard is available to all enrolled students who may need access to resources to support academic and personal success. Through our Cougar Cupboard, all students can get up to 30 pounds of FREE groceries a week. For more information, click [here](#).

**Mental Health and Wellness Resources.** The University of Houston has a number of resources to support students' mental health and overall wellness. The Student Health Center offers a Psychiatry Clinic for enrolled UH students. Call 713-743-5149 during clinic hours, Monday through Friday 8:00 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. CSAC runs the Cougar Cupboard. Additionally, CSAC provides 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 CSAC and offers free clothes to students so that all Coogs can feel good in their fit.

CSAC also hosts a series of cultural and community-based events that foster social connection and help the Cougar community come closer to gether. Visit the [CSAC homepage](#) or follow CSAC on Instagram: @uh\_CSAC and @uhcupbrd.

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 Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program (TLAP) also supports law students who are dealing with stress, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and other mental health problems. You can reach TLAP at any time at 1-800-343-8527. TLAP's website includes a page with links to resources about mental health that are of interest to law students: <https://www.tlaphelps.org/law-students> [Links to an external site.](#). Check it out.

**Title IX/Sexual Misconduct.** Per the UHS Sexual Misconduct Policy, I am 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 I 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 here on [the Title IX website](#).

**Syllabus Updates.** This syllabus may be modified as needed during the semester. Any changes will be announced in writing via email and Canvas.

## Syllabus. We will cover the following topics in class each day.

| Class                             | Assignment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Day 1</b><br>Monday, Aug 10    | <b>Legal English   Sources of U.S. Law   Introduction to the Socratic Method</b><br>Analyzing Authorities   Sources and Components of U.S. Legal Rules                                                                                              |
| <b>Day 2</b><br>Tuesday, Aug 11   | <b>Effectively Reading and Understanding U.S. Law   Mastering the Socratic Method</b><br>Critical Reading Skills   Understanding IRAC   Issue Spotting   Rule Formulation                                                                           |
| <b>Day 3</b><br>Wednesday, Aug 12 | <b>Successfully Completing Your U.S. Course of Study</b><br>Reading Efficiently   Using Case Briefs   The 3-Step Study Process   Using Outlines                                                                                                     |
| <b>Day 4</b><br>Thursday, Aug 13  | <b>U.S. Principles of Professionalism in the Study and Practice of Law</b><br>Honor Code   Plagiarism   Professional Responsibility<br><br><b>Resources Available to You</b><br>Legal Writing Center   Your Professors and Tutors   Former Students |
| <b>Day 5</b><br>Friday, Aug 14    | <b>Final Exam</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |