

**Lawyering Skills & Strategies 1**  
**Sections B2 & C2**  
**Fall 2020**

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**1.     Overview and Course Objectives**

Welcome to your first semester of law school, and to Lawyering Skills & Strategies 1 (LSS 1). In this course, you will learn the basic workings of the American legal system; how to analyze and apply legal sources; and other skills you need to succeed in law school and beyond, with a strong focus on research and writing. To accomplish these goals, you will draft documents; work through legal problems inside and outside the classroom; review texts about effective writing; and engage in simulation exercises. More specifically, the course objectives for LSS 1 and 2 include:

<b>1</b>	Understanding the sources, hierarchy, and precedential value of laws.
<b>2</b>	Ability to distinguish different types of legal rules, to dissect legal rules into their basic components, and to synthesize a unified rule of law from disparate sources.
<b>3</b>	Proficiency in identifying issues applicable to the client's case.
<b>4</b>	Effective execution of on-line legal research and selection of authority to address issues in the client's case.
<b>5</b>	Proficiency in understanding and applying case precedent to the client's case.
<b>6</b>	Proficiency in understanding and applying enacted law to the client's case.
<b>7</b>	Ability to translate legal research and analysis into an objective writing that is organized effectively, conveys all relevant and required substance clearly and concisely, and omits extraneous matters.
<b>8</b>	Ability to translate legal research and analysis into a persuasive writing that is organized effectively; conveys all relevant and required substance clearly, concisely, and strategically; and omits extraneous matters. <b>This course objective will be covered in the spring semester.</b>

9	Exposure to the considerations underlying contract negotiation and drafting to address the client's needs effectively.
10	Introduction to the general principles for legal citation, proficiency in <i>Bluebook</i> citation for cases and statutes, and proficiency in <i>Greenbook</i> citation for cases. <b>The <i>Greenbook</i> citation system will be covered in the spring semester.</b>
11	Proficiency in using correct grammar and punctuation regardless of the document or communication drafted.
12	Awareness of how the topics discussed and assignments given in the course fit into the practice of law.
13	Awareness of ethical and professional issues in practice.

## 2. Course Materials

Our class will be managed using a webpage maintained by The West Education Network (TWEN). The URL is <http://lawschool.westlaw.com/twen/> and you need your Westlaw password to access the webpage. After you register your Westlaw password, sign on to TWEN and add course webpage **Lawyering Skills & Strategies – 2020-2021 – Gomez**.

You are required to purchase the following textbooks:

- *Becoming A Legal Writer: A Workbook of Explanations to Develop Legal Analysis and Writing Skills*, Robin Boyle-Laisure, Christine Coughlin, and Sandy Patrick, (Carolina Academic Press 2019), ISBN: 978-1-531-00448-4.
- *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (21st ed. 2020), ISBN: 978-0-578-66615-0. This will be a resource for the entire year and beyond and was just released this summer, so **you must buy a new, print copy**. Do not purchase the online version.
- *The Bluebook Uncovered: A Practical Guide to Mastering Legal Citation (Twenty-First Ed. of Bluebook)*, free online version forthcoming. I will provide the URL for this text as soon as it becomes available.

I recommend the following materials as optional additional resources:

- *A Lawyer Writes*, Christine Coughlin et al. (3rd ed. 2018).
- *Manual on Usage & Style* (14th ed. 2017), published by the Texas Law Review Association.

- *The Elements of Style: Simplified and Illustrated for Busy People*, William Strunk, Jr. & Virginia Campbell, available on Amazon.
- *Core Grammar for Lawyers*, available at [www.coregrammarforlawyers.com](http://www.coregrammarforlawyers.com).

### 3. Class Attendance and Conferences

This course will be delivered primarily through distance education due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. If the health situation changes, our class structure may also change. As circumstances are now, I expect to hold the first class of each week live via Zoom (e.g., the Tuesday class for Section B and the Wednesday class for Section C), and the second class of the week asynchronously using various materials posted to our class TWEN page, including video lectures, individual and group exercises, and other multimedia formats. All synchronous classes will be recorded, and the videos posted to our class TWEN page.

Class times and a Zoom link will be provided closer to the first day of class. Any changes to the regularly scheduled meeting time and location are reflected on the syllabus or will be announced via email.

You must also attend individual conferences and small group meetings as set forth in the syllabus. Sign-ups for these conferences will be made available via TWEN sign-up sheets as appropriate.

I will take attendance during each class session, conference, and small group meeting, and I reserve the right to count you as absent if you are not present ten minutes after the class or conference has begun. If you cannot attend a synchronous class meeting, it is your responsibility to contact me in advance of the class (barring an emergency that prevents you from doing so). ***Under UHLC's attendance policy, you may miss no more than 20% of scheduled class sessions during the semester.*** If you exceed this percentage, I will notify the Dean for Student Services, which could result in your dismissal from the class.

### 4. Etiquette for Synchronous Zoom Class Meetings

In order to make this course as effective as possible, please follow the guidelines below.

- Access the Zoom link at least a few minutes before the scheduled class time.
- When you join the session, **turn your video camera on but mute your microphone**. It is fine if you need to turn off your video camera occasionally, but if you do so often or for extended amounts of time I may consider it an absence.
- Assume you will always be visible and audible to others, so act and dress accordingly.

## 5. Assignments and Grading

### Graded Assignments:

The following assignments constitute the baseline for your grade for this course, subject to adjustments identified in this information sheet:

- **Closed Universe Memorandum – 10%**
- **In-Class Email Assignment – 15%**
- **Citation Exam – 15%**
- **Open Universe Memorandum – 55%**
- **Ungraded Assignments – 5%**

If a graded assignment is not turned in by the deadline, I may deduct 10% of your total points during each hour that your assignment is late, starting with the first hour. So, if your assignment is due at 10 am on a given day, I may deduct 10% if you submit it at 10:05 am on the due date, 20% if you submit it at 11:05 am, etc.

If you are unable to complete a graded assignment by the deadline, you must contact me *before* the due date to seek an extension. ***I will consider extensions for emergencies only.*** Computer problems, routine illnesses, and assignments for other classes do not qualify as emergencies. If any deadlines present major difficulties for multiple students because of proximity to midterm exams or similar academic obligations, please inform me as soon as you become aware of the problem. The sooner you let me know, the more likely it is that we can work out a fair solution.

UHLC uses an anonymous grading system to ensure fairness in grading. Your name should not appear anywhere on the graded assignments, and you must remove personal metadata from your assignments in accordance with the instructions provided below. You should not give me your exam number, and you should take care to avoid providing information on graded assignments that may identify you. I reserve the right to deduct points from a graded assignment if you fail to abide by instructions that are intended to safeguard anonymity, including those regarding extension requests.

### Ungraded Assignments:

Throughout the semester, I will assign exercises to be completed during or outside class. While these exercises are ungraded, their satisfactory completion accounts for 5% of your grade. Because these assignments are mandatory, failure to complete any of them may result in not passing this course.

### Curve, Grade Distribution, and Honor Code:

This course is subject to a mandatory grading curve. The average grade in each section must be between 3.2 and 3.4.

The course is also subject to the mandatory First Year Grade Distribution:

A or A-: 5% to 30%  
B+ or B or B-: 50% to 90%  
C+ or below: 5% to 20%

The UHLC Honor Code applies to this class. <http://www.law.uh.edu/student/HONOR-CODE-AND-PROCEDURES.pdf>. Students are responsible for knowing its provisions and complying with them. Please direct any questions regarding the Honor Code's applications to specific activities to me.

### **Formatting Requirements:**

Unless instructed otherwise, all assignments must conform to these specifications:

- Use Times New Roman, 12-point type, on white letter-size paper.
- Double-space each assignment, except for headings.
- Use one-inch margins on all sides.
- Place page numbers in the bottom center of each page.
- Adhere to any other instructions provided for an assignment.

### **Remove Metadata:**

To safeguard anonymity, you must scrub each graded assignment of metadata that could identify you by taking the following steps immediately before submitting it:

- Under "File" (typically at the top left of your screen when you are in Word), click the "Check for Issues" box.
- Click "Inspect Document."
- Click "Yes" when asked if you want to save changes.
- Click "Inspect."
- If the inspection reveals that data were found under "Document Properties and Personal Information" (it probably will), click "Remove All."

## **6. Office Hours**

Once the semester begins, I will provide information regarding office hours and a Zoom link by email, and students will be "let in" to the Zoom room one at a time. I will not hold office hours during weeks in which I hold individual conferences. In addition, I am always happy to make myself available on request. Just email me, and we can find a time to talk via phone or Zoom.

## **7. Legal Writing Center**

An excellent resource for free individual tutoring is the Legal Writing Center, located in the library near the circulation desk. The Center is staffed with outstanding second- and third-year law students who can help you with legal writing, legal research, citation, and style and usage. Note,

however, that the writing fellows are prohibited from assisting you with certain graded assignments before you submit them. You can schedule an appointment with a writing fellow by emailing [C\\_LawLegalWritingCenter@central.uh.edu](mailto:C_LawLegalWritingCenter@central.uh.edu) or by calling 713-743-0759. Walk-ins are also welcome.

## **8. Accessibility and Accommodations**

UHLC is committed to ensuring that all students enjoy equal access and full participation. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on a disability (including any chronic or temporary medical or mental health condition), feel free to reach out to me so that we can discuss options. If you require any support services, you may contact Samantha Ary, Academic Records Coordinator. Ms. Ary's office is in the Office of Student Services suite, and she can be reached at [sary@central.uh.edu](mailto: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 process the request.

## **9. Chosen Names and Preferred Pronouns**

I want to address each of you in a manner that corresponds to your identity. Although mistakes happen, chosen names and preferred pronouns—including non-binary ones such as they / them / their—must be respected in my classroom. Feel free to reach out to me at any time if you want to make me aware of your chosen name or preferred pronoun, or if you have concerns about how your classmates or I address you.

## **10. Counseling and Psychological Services**

Counseling and psychological services (CAPS) is available to help students who are having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to the demands of a professional program, or feeling sad and hopeless. [www.uh.edu/caps](http://www.uh.edu/caps). You can reach 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 needed for the “Let’s Talk” program, a drop-in consultation service held at convenient locations and hours around campus. [http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets\\_talk.html](http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html).

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 sources about mental health that are of interest to law students: <https://www.tlaphelps.org/law-students>.

## **11. Anti-Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policies**

UHLC and the University of Houston are committed to maintaining and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where 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 SAM 01.D.07 and Sexual

Misconduct Policy SAM 01.D.08: <http://www.uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/uhs-policies/sams/01-general-information/index.php>  
[http://www.uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/\\_docs/sam/01/1d7.pdf](http://www.uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/_docs/sam/01/1d7.pdf) (antidiscrimination)  
[http://www.uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/\\_docs/sam/01/1d8.pdf](http://www.uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/_docs/sam/01/1d8.pdf) (sexual misconduct)

Please be aware that under the sexual misconduct policy, SAM 01.D.08, faculty and other University employees are required to report to the University any information received regarding sexual misconduct as defined in the policy. Due to this reporting requirement, faculty members and other employees are not a confidential resource. The reporting obligations under the sexual misconduct policy extends to alleged conduct by University employees and students.