

**Introduction to American Law
Fall 2021**

Professor Davis

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Course Objective:

Welcome to the University of Houston Law Center and the study of American law! This course strives to provide perspective and understanding of the basic legal concepts and mechanics of the U.S. legal system. This class will cover topics including, but not limited to, government structure, the judicial system, civil procedure, constitutional law, torts, contracts, criminal law and procedure, and property.

Class sessions:

Mondays and Wednesdays, 9a.m. – 10:30a.m.

The week of August 16th the class meets Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 9-10:30a.m.

Reading Material:

Required:

Katherine A. Currier & Thomas E. Eimermann, *The Study of Law: A Critical Thinking Approach* (5th ed. 2020).

Recommended (for preparation for the Bar Exam):

Stephen Emmanuel, *Strategies & Tactics for the MBE* (7th ed. 2020).

You are expected to be able to discuss the assigned reading in depth, so please make a commitment to be prepared. Your advanced preparation gives you the best opportunity to correctly synthesize and participate in our class discussion.

Office hours:

If you have any questions about the course, please ask me. Questions are welcome and encouraged! My office hours are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:30a.m. to noon, and by appointment. My office is located in suite 15J in the Lawyering Skills and Strategies Suite.

Attendance Requirement:

80 percent attendance in class is required. Punctuality is expected. A class roll will be circulated each day and each student must initial the appropriate square next to his or her name for the particular date of attendance. Initialing the roll indicates that the student will be in attendance for the entire, and not part, of the class session. Each student is responsible for initialing the roll sheet at each class meeting. If the sheet is not initialed before the professor leaves the classroom at the end of a session, students who have not initialed the roll for that class will be considered and

counted absent. Students will not be allowed to argue at a later time that they were actually present on days in which the class roll was not initialed. Those individuals not satisfying the attendance requirement will be reported to UH Law Center administrative officials and may be dropped from the course.

Grading:

Your grade will be based on the midterm and the final exams. Each exam will consist of multiple-choice, short essays, and long essays. The examinations will be discussed as the semester progresses. **Both exams will be closed book.**

Student Participation:

Students with poor class participation may have their final grade dropped by 1/3 of a letter grade. The decision to drop a grade for participation is at my discretion and is non-negotiable. A drop in class participation can result from a combination of unpreparedness, not paying attention in class, tardiness, and absences (even if you are within the six-absence limit). In rare circumstances, a student may go up a 1/3 of a letter grade for making a substantial contribution to the class. Note that volunteering every class does not constitute a substantial contribution—quality, not quantity matters.

Honor Code:

The UHLC Honor Code applies to this class. It is set forth in its entirety in the Student Handbook. You are responsible for knowing the provisions of the UHLC Honor Code, and for full compliance with all of the UHLC Honor Code provisions. Failure to do so will result in referral to the UHLC Honor Court, and may result in you failing this class.

Computer and Phone Use:

The permitted use of personal computers in the classroom is permitted solely for the purposes of (i) reviewing preparation notes and (ii) taking notes during class. Specifically excluded from in-class computer usage is anything beyond these activities, e.g., “surfing the web” and messaging. Nonparticipation and nonresponsiveness in the classroom discussion attributable to diversionary uses of your personal computer constitutes an absence from the class. I reserve the right to disallow the use of laptops in the classroom at any time throughout the semester. The use of other electronics, including recording devices, is prohibited during class time. Please be sure that all noise-making devices, including cell phones, are in silent mode or powered off.

Instructor Evaluations:

I welcome any comments or suggestions that you may have regarding my teaching style, class presentation, or any other related subject. Please feel free to provide me with such comments during the course of the semester as they will help me to improve my teaching. I will carefully consider all of the comments and suggestions that I receive.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that the University of Houston make reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities as defined by and within the meaning of the statute. Students who have questions about or feel that they need assistance under the ADA should contact Student Services.

Counseling and Psychological Services:

The University of Houston’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 or hopeless. You can reach CAPS at www.uh.edu/caps and by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you know someone who is in crisis. No appointment is necessary for the “Let’s Talk” program (http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html), a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus.

Proposed Course Outline:

Attached is a proposed course schedule for the first week of the semester. I will release an updated and complete course schedule in the first week of class. I may, of course, modify it as the semester progresses, to achieve course objectives.

I may, at times, post additional materials to my Blackboard website. When this occurs, you will be notified via email.

Introduction to American Law Syllabus (Fall 2019)		
DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
Aug. 16	Government Structure	Chap. 3
Aug. 17	continued	
Aug. 18	Judicial System	Chap. 4
Aug. 19	Civil Procedure	Chap. 5 pp. 109-115, cases provided by the professor

Additional assignments will be added as the semester progresses.

The Midterm is tentatively scheduled for Friday, September 24th from 9-10:30 a.m. and will be CLOSED BOOK.

Overview of the semester:

- Government Structure
- Judicial System
- Legal English
- Civil Procedure
- Constitutional Law (Con Law)
- Torts
- Contracts
- Criminal Law
- Laws Affecting Business (if possible)
- Family Law (if possible)