

Lawyering Skills and Strategies for Foreign LL.M. Students

Fall 2021 ~ Professor Laurel Simmons

lepsimmons@uh.edu
Office Hours: By appointment
Telephone: 650-644-8207

Course Objectives. Welcome to the University of Houston Law Center and the study of law in the United States. In this course, the curriculum will begin with instruction in the case method study of law employed by U.S. law schools, including case briefing and recitation. We will then shift our focus to the U.S. legal system and the skills U.S. lawyers employ in day-to-day practice, with special emphasis on writing skills you will be required to master to pass the Texas bar exam. The curriculum is problem-based, and we will use fact pattern simulations from prior Multistate Performance Tests (MPTs) administered by the National Conference of Bar Examiners to identify and analyze legal issues and write client documents. We will also conduct legal research exercises. Finally, we will identify and discuss skills you will need to hone in order to prepare and perform well on your law school exams.

Some writing and revising we will do in class. I will assign limited outside reading so that you can complete other writing and revising outside of class. I will be mindful of your time.

Grade Calculation. The ultimate purpose of this class is to teach you how to use the doctrinal law you are learning in a U.S. practice setting. Your grades will be based on writing assignments, a research assignment, and a final exam. Specifically, I will calculate your grade as follows:

Assigned Interim Class and Writing Exercises	15% (completion grade)
MPT #1	10% (Memo)
MPT #2	15% (Letter)
MPT #3	20% (Brief)
Final MPT	25% (Memo)
In-class Research Assignment	10% (5% research; 5% written response)
Oral Presentation	5% (PPT)

The completion grade on any assigned interim writing exercises will be based on your timely and meaningful completion of the assignments.

All out-of-class writing assignments and your final will be similar to the bar exam's MPTs. These will be closed-universe, timed assessments.

Grading in LSS is anonymous. The Law Center mandates that LSS courses be graded on a 2.8 to 3.2 curve. The Law Center's grading system is explained in detail in the Student Handbook. In short, the Law Center assigns letter grades with numerical equivalents (i.e., grade points) to each student. The average of the grade points assigned in a class must fall between 2.8 and 3.2. Students receive 4.0 grade points for an A, 3.67 for an A-, 3.33 for a B+, and so on. For additional discussion, *see* UHLC Student Handbook at page 18.

You must turn in all assignments on time. If you are ill or otherwise unable to turn in a graded assignment on time, please notify me via e-mail prior to the time the assignment is due to seek an accommodation.

Anonymous Numbers. Later in the semester, you will be given an exam number. You must use your exam number on all assignments. Up until the time you receive your exam numbers, please use the **last** four digits of your UH PeopleSoft number.

Class Web Course. I will maintain a course website for this course (Canvas through Lexis). The course webpage is named LSS (Simmons). On the account, you will find a copy of this course description and syllabus, additional readings, handouts, and exercises covered in class.

You will also turn in your assignments under Assignments on the course page.

When you register, please use an email address that you check frequently. I will send out all course communications through the course page and will expect that you are aware of these communications.

Textbooks and Online Resources. There will not be a textbook for this class. I will provide supplements with readings for class. These will be provided to you free of charge on the course page.

If you are a non-native English speaker, or simply unfamiliar with the U.S. legal system, you may find the following books and online services useful. They are by no means required:

Karen M. Ross, *Essential Legal English in Context: Understanding the Vocabulary of US Law and Government* (2019). ISBN 978-1-4798-3167-8.

Bryan Garner, *The Redbook: A Manual on Legal Style* (4th ed. 2018). ISBN 978-1642421002.

For study skills and law school hacks: <http://www.jennifermcooper.com/>

For refreshers on grammar and punctuation rules: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html

For sources of law and the legal method:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7g_CQSIG4S8LNHbB7SErpyL6hKxx17o0

For IRAC/CREAC/CRAC: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZK38vru_GM

For exam writing: http://www.ericejohnson.com/docs/Tip_Sheet_on_Exam_Writing.pdf;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FkP0cYy5o8>

For legal research: <http://law.indiana.libguides.com/c.php?g=27591&p=169360> or Terrill Pollman, Jeanne Frazier Price, Linda Berger, *Legal Research* (2017). ISBN 978-1454867890.

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. If you have questions about whether a certain activity constitutes a breach of the UHLC Honor Code, please ask me.

Class Time. For the first week of class we will meet Monday through Thursday, from 10:30-11:50 a.m. Afterward, we will meet Mondays and Wednesdays at that time.

Attendance Policy. Finally, UHLC attendance policy dictates that you may miss no more than five scheduled classes. The Law Center considers mandatory outside-of-class activities as scheduled classes. I will count you as absent if you 1) are not in the classroom or other specified location at the time class is scheduled to begin, 2) are unprepared for class, or 3) fail to put forth a good faith effort on an in-class assignment.

Student Services. 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:
http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html.

Syllabus. Syllabus will be provided with daily assigned readings and due dates for the first week of class.

SYLLABUS