

**Introduction to American Law
Fall 2022**

Professor Kalu

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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, 9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

The week of August 15th, the class meets Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 9 a.m-10:30 a.m.

Reading Material:

Required:

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

Recommended (for preparation for the Bar Exam):

Steven L. Emanuel, *Strategies & Tactics for the MBE* (7th ed. 2020).

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

Office hours:

If you have any questions about the course, please ask me. Questions are welcome and encouraged! My office hours are by appointment.

Attendance Requirement:

Eighty percent (80%) attendance in class is required. (This means each student has a five-absence limit.) I will take roll at the beginning of class. To be counted present, you must be in attendance *for the entire, and not part*, of the class session. Those individuals not satisfying the attendance requirement will be reported to UH Law Center administrative officials and may be dropped from, or fail, the course.

Given the pandemic, you can expect some flexibility with the attendance policy and policies to make up class. But, I can only assist you when I know your needs. So, please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any difficulties this semester.

Grading:

Your grade will be based on the midterm exam, the final exam, and participation on the discussion board. 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.** The midterm is worth 35%, the final exam 60%, and the discussion board is 5%.

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 five-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 allowed 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 non-responsiveness in the classroom discussion attributable to diversionary uses of your personal computer constitute 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 ensure 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 semester, as they will help me improve my teaching. I will carefully consider all the comments and suggestions that I receive. You can also reach out to my colleague, Prof. Megan Davis (mlwilso3@central.uh.edu), with any concerns. She is happy to assist you as well.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Wellness:

This is an inclusive learning space.

At UHLC, we are committed to ensuring inclusive online and classroom learning spaces, where you will be treated with respect and dignity, and where everyone is provided the equitable opportunity to participate, contribute, and succeed.

In this course, all students are welcome regardless of socio-economic status, age, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, national origin, veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, political affiliation, marital status, and other diverse identities that we each bring to class. Our class is richer for this diversity.

Inclusive learning spaces facilitate the innovation and creative thought that enhance student success. This success arises from the participation, support, and understanding of you and your colleagues. Therefore, I encourage you to speak up and share your views but also understand that you are doing so in a learning environment in which we are all expected to engage respectfully and with regard to the dignity of all others.

If you feel like your class performance is impacted in any way by your experiences inside or outside of class, please reach out to me. I want to be a resource for you. If you feel more comfortable speaking with someone besides me, Student Services is an excellent resource: 713.743.2182. Finally, I encourage you to bring any issues negatively impacting UHLC's openness to diversity and inclusion to the Law Center's Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The D&I Committee's charge includes "[b]uilding on the Law Center's strengths as a diverse and inclusive environment." You can contact the committee directly at UHLCD&I@uh.edu .

Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of this course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

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 must be respected in my classroom, including non-binary ones such as they/them/their. Please 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.

My pronouns are she/her. You may call me Prof. Kalu.

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 have 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 if you know someone who is in crisis. However, 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 Schedule (Fall 2022)		
DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
Aug. 15	Government Structure	Chap. 3
Aug. 16	continued	
Aug. 17	Judicial System	Chap. 4
Aug. 18	Civil Procedure	Chap. 5 pp. 117-129, cases provided by the professor

Additional assignments will be added as the semester progresses.

The midterm is tentatively scheduled for Friday, September 23rd, from 9 a.m -10:30 a.m. and will be CLOSED BOOK.

Overview of the semester:

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