

# Lawyering Skills and Strategies

PROF. MAKIETA A. BRANTLEY

FALL 2023

## Course Objectives

The learning objectives for this semester include the following:

- Legal System: Understanding the sources, hierarchy, and precedential value of legal authority.
- Legal Research: Proficiency in identifying issues applicable to a client's case; effective execution of online legal research techniques; and precise selection of legal authority.
- Legal Analysis: Ability to distinguish, structure, and dissect different types of legal rules; proficiency in understanding and applying enacted law to a client's case; proficiency in understanding and applying case law to a client's case.
- Legal Writing: Ability to translate legal research and analysis into an objectively written document that is organized logically; conveys all relevant and required content clearly and concisely; omits extraneous information; and uses correct grammar and punctuation.
- Legal Citation: Familiarity with the general principles for legal citation, the specific *Bluebook* rules for select legal authority, and the ability to apply them correctly.

## Class Attendance

It is my intention that our class will be highly interactive – this is because I believe that you will learn much from each other as well as from me. You are responsible for all reading assignments, and to acquire strong analytic and communication skills, your active participation in class discussions, class workshops, and at conferences will be critical. Out of respect for your fellow students, please turn off your cell phones while in class. When using laptop in class, it is disruptive to check email or surf the Internet; during class, laptops may be used only for class-related purposes. I will always share any powerpoint slides used after the class has concluded.

Attendance is mandatory. Attendance will be taken during each class session, which includes Conferences. If you are unable to attend class, you must advise me via email before class (barring an emergency that prevents you from doing so). In accordance with the Law Center's attendance policy, you may miss no more than five class sessions during the semester. On your sixth absence, I will send you to the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs to discuss your continued enrollment in the course.

## Fall Course Materials

*A Lawyer Writes*, Coughlin, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition



*Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation*, 21<sup>st</sup> Edition



I will also ask you to purchase a subscription to “Mastering the Bluebook Interactive Exercises.” We will discuss in class.

## Documents

Judges can be extraordinarily strict about compliance with the rules of their court and now is a good time for you to learn the analogous rules for this course. The specific directions for the style and layout of your written work for this class will be outlined in your Assignment Sheets. Keep in mind that part of what you are learning in this course is how lawyers and other professionals conduct themselves and adhere to professional norms of conduct and behavior. Failure to follow these rules may result in a violation of the Student Honor Code.

Generally, all documents for this course will be submitted electronically via Canvas; such electronic submission will be timely if I receive it before the beginning of the class in which it is due (unless another time is stated on the Assignment Sheet).

## Formatting, Fonts, and Page Limits

I will detail the page limits for each assignment. Directions will be found in the Assignment Sheet and explained in class.

Here are general rules to follow (unless directed otherwise on your Assignment Sheet):

- All work is to be on 8 ½" x 11" white paper, using Times New Roman 12 point font.
- Set margins at one-inch all around.

- Single space the document, with double space around headers and between paragraphs.
- Insert page numbers on the lower, center of the page. Do not insert a page number on the first page. (This may affect the document's pagination, so adjust accordingly.)
- Fully-justify the document
- Include your banner ID number on your paper.
- For assignments other than memoranda**, put your ID number, date, and assignment title in the upper left hand corner of the document.
- For memoranda assignments**, use the memorandum header below:

#### MEMORANDUM

TO: Professor Maikieta Brantley  
 FROM: ID #  
 RE: Client Name: Issue  
 DATE: \_\_\_\_\_, 202X

Please do not tinker with font size or the spacing of the lines of your papers to try to cram more words on a page. Please do not embellish your assignments with elaborate graphics, italics, or other modified lettering, unless required by the applicable citation rules or by specific instructions I provide.

#### Citation

For your assignments, I require that you follow the rules set out in the Bluebook Citation Manual, which is used by most law schools, courts, and law reviews. The citation form in the Bluebook is the form likely to be used by the vast majority of competent practicing lawyers and that is why we ask you to follow it carefully.

#### Professionalism and Deadlines

Professional behavior is critical for all lawyers, and this course begins your introduction to the standards of conduct and performance expected of all lawyers. Because lawyers learn quickly the importance of meeting deadlines, I will hold you to strict deadlines for all assignments. The basic rule is that for you to pass the LSS course, all assignments must be completed to my satisfaction, all assignments must be turned in on time, and each assignment must meet what I consider to be the acceptable standard for work in the course. I do not have to accept and review a paper if it was submitted late or if you turned it in at the wrong place. Generally, I impose a 10 percent penalty for each 24 hour period an assignment is late. A student's failure to perform or complete any assignment in the course, whether graded or ungraded, interim or final, means that student risks failing the course if he or she does not remedy the situation immediately. At the very least, if a student fails to comply with the rules for an assignment, the student may forfeit the opportunity to have the benefit of my critique or feedback, and will be at a serious disadvantage for passing the later graded assignments. I may make exceptions to the rules for legitimate and serious emergencies, or when you have obtained my permission in advance.

## Grading

LSS is a skills course. As a result, your work is cumulative during the semester but also includes a final exam. Your grade at the end of the semester will be calculated as follows:

- 10% Professionalism and Credit/No Credit Assignments
- 10% Research Email to Senior Attorney
- 20% Research Memorandum
- 10% In Class Research Assignment
- 50% Final Examination Memorandum

## Review of Written Work

You may obtain free individual tutoring through the Legal Writing Center (“Center”). Several outstanding law students, known as Legal Writing Fellows (“Fellows”), staff the Center. They are able to help you with legal writing, research, and citation issues as well as style and usage questions. You may email [c\\_law\\_legal\\_writing\\_center@central.uh.edu](mailto:c_law_legal_writing_center@central.uh.edu) using your UH email address to schedule a virtual appointment with a Fellow. Virtual drop-ins on the UH Legal Writing Center Team site during weekly office hours are also welcome. At any point during the semester, I may require or recommend that you meet with a Fellow.

## Honor Code

The UHLC Honor Code applies to all aspects of 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 specific activities or situations related to this course. Your continuing enrollment in this course is deemed to be a pledge by you under the Honor Code to comply with the Honor Code in relation to this course and to comply with the instructions in the course syllabus.

## AI Generated Text

The software technology known as artificial intelligence has recently expanded its capability to generate text (AI Generated Text). Examples of the technology include what are known as “generative” large language models (LLMs), and a specific implementation what is well known in the general public is ChatGPT. These systems can generate text in response to prompts and/or input of other text/documents/code/images. The output, the AI Generated Text, appears to have human-mimicking “intelligence” and is thus potentially usable as a substitute for written work product one might generate themselves. AI Generated Text can include computer code or programs as well as human language content.

Your continuing enrollment in this course is deemed to be a pledge by you under the Honor Code to not prompt, generate, obtain, read, or use any AI Generated Text in relation to any activity or assessment in this course. This applies to AI Generated Text from yourself or others.

This pledge includes that your assessment work product in the course is without any contribution from AI Generated Text. This specifically extends to the plagiarism policy and unauthorized aid/materials parts of the Honor Code: AI Generated Text will be treated as from another/other in applying the plagiarism policy to this course. The term “assessment” means any work product generated for this course that is submitted to the instructor or presented in a class session, regardless whether it is graded content or not. Assessments include mid-terms and final exams. AI Generated Text may not be used in the development or drafting of any assessments created by you in a non-proctored environment, such as a “take-home” final examination.

### Student Resources

The University of Houston has a number of resources to support students’ mental health and overall wellness, including CoogsCARE and the UH Go App. UH Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers 24/7 mental health support for all students, addressing various concerns like stress, college adjustment and sadness. CAPS provides individual and couples counseling, group therapy, workshops and connections to other support services on and off-campus. For assistance visit [uh.edu/caps](http://uh.edu/caps), call 713-743-5454, or visit a Let’s Talk location in-person or virtually. Let’s Talk are daily, informal confidential consultations with CAPS therapists where no appointment or paperwork is needed.

The Student Health Center offers a Psychiatry Clinic for enrolled UH students. Call 713-743-5149 during clinic hours, Monday through Friday 8 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.

**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](https://988lifeline.org).**

### Title IX/Sexual Misconduct

Per the UHS Sexual Misconduct Policy, your instructor is 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 they 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 on the Title IX website at <https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/title-ix-sexual-misconduct/resources/>.

### Reasonable 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 (Dart 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 the website: <https://uh.edu/accessibility/> calling (713) 743-5400, or emailing [jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU](mailto:jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU).

### Recording of Class

Students may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without advanced written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use instructor's recordings for their own studying and notetaking. 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.

**I reserve the right to modify this syllabus at any time and will inform students as promptly as possible of any modifications to the same.**