

LAWYERING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES SYLLABUS - FALL 2026

Professor Jessica Feinstein

Professor Feinstein's Contact Information

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. in person (343K)
or by appointment

Class Home Page

Our class has a Canvas page where course materials and other information is posted. Please make sure to check it regularly.

Course Objectives

In this class, we will develop and improve your legal reading, research, and writing skills. These skills will be critical to your success during law school, on the bar exam, and in your legal practice. This semester, you will learn how to:

- Understand the sources, hierarchy, and precedential value of laws.
- Identify legal rules in case law, dissect rules into their basic components, and synthesize legal rules using multiple sources.
- Identify issues that apply to a client's case.
- Execute online legal research and select appropriate authority to address issues in your client's case.
- Apply case precedent and enacted law to your client's case.
- Translate legal research and analysis into objective writing that is organized effectively, conveys relevant content clearly, and omits extraneous matters.
- Understand and properly use Bluebook and Greenbook citations.
- Improve grammar and punctuation.
- Recognize ethical and professional issues in practice.

Required Texts and Readings

- The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation (Columbia Law Review Ass'n et al. eds., 22nd ed. 2025) (the "Bluebook") (You will need this book all year, not just fall). Please purchase the print book, you will need it for class and the final exam.
- Robin Boyle-Laisure, Christine Coughlin, & Sandy Patrick, Becoming a Legal Writer (Carolina Press 2025).
- Handouts, web links, and other material posted on Canvas.

Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is essential for your success in this course. I will take attendance. I reserve the right to count you as absent if you arrive more than ten minutes late or leave more than ten minutes early. Missing more than 4 classes will make you subject to dismissal from the class. Please contact me as soon as possible to alert me to any issues you are facing that affect your attendance.

Technology

We will be writing and researching regularly in class. Bring your laptop, Westlaw password, and Lexis password to every class. Please also bring a notepad and pen for writing. Improper use of a computer or cellphone during class (including, but not limited to, composing, sending, or reading emails; instant messaging; searching or browsing the Internet; playing games; and/or viewing movies) may, at the direction of Professor Feinstein, result in dismissal from the class session and/or a reduction in your final grade.

Graded Assignments

1. Research Assessments (10% and 15% of Course Grade)

You will have two in-class assessments of your research skills gained through the Research Modules. Bring your laptop to class for each of these assessments.

2. Final Memorandum (35% of Course Grade)

You will research and write a memorandum addressing the issues presented by the file.

3. LRW Exam (35% of Course Grade)

At the end of the semester, you will take a three-hour exam that will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and a longer form answer. The exam will cover skills and concepts from the entire semester.

4. Professionalism and Exercise Completion (5% of Course Grade)

As future attorneys, I expect you to demonstrate professionalism in this class. This means coming to class and meetings with me on time and prepared, participating in class discussions, avoiding using Facebook, Twitter, chats and similar programs in class when we are using laptops, making a good faith effort on ungraded assignments, and showing respect for me and other students during class and in any email or other communications. In addition, an important part of your professionalism grade will be timely completion of and *making a good faith effort on* any exercises I ask you to do. Unexcused failure in any regard will result in a loss of professionalism points.

Timeliness

Knowing how to budget and manage time is an essential lawyering skill, so I expect all graded writing assignments to be submitted on time. If a graded writing assignment is more

than fifteen minutes late, I may deduct 10% of the total points for every hour (or part of the hour) that the graded writing assignment is late.

I will consider extensions for true emergencies only. Computer problems and routine illnesses do not constitute true emergencies.

Ungraded Assignments

Throughout the semester, you will complete ungraded practice exercises and writing assignments. You must make a good faith effort on these assignments and complete them on time. Any work that in my discretion does not reflect a good faith effort will have to be redone or rewritten to an acceptable standard within a prescribed time. If you fail to do either of these things, you may receive a grade penalty or receive an incomplete for the class.

Formatting Requirements

All practice exercises and graded assignments must conform to these specifications:

- Times New Roman, 12-point type on white letter-size paper.
- Double space each page.
- One-inch margins on all sides.
- Place page numbers in the bottom center of each page.
- Print on one side only (if a hard copy is requested).
- Staple your paper in top left corner (if a hard copy is requested).
- Adhere to all other requirements stated in the instruction sheet.

Office Hours

If you have any questions about the course, please ask me. In addition to the in-person office hours listed above, I can meet with you by appointment via Zoom or in person.

Inclusion

I want to address each of you in a manner that respects your name and identity. Please reach out to me at any time if you want to make me aware of your chosen name or preferred pronouns, or if you have concerns about how I address you, including the pronunciation of your name.

Legal Writing Center

You may obtain free individual tutoring through the Legal Writing Center, which is located on the fourth floor of the Law Center in Room 413B. Several outstanding law students, known as Legal Writing Fellows, staff the Center. They are able to help you with legal writing, research, and citation issues as well as style and usage questions. However, the Fellows are prohibited from assisting you with any graded assignment before you submit it. You may email c_law_legal_writing_center@central.uh.edu to schedule an appointment with a Fellow.

Please Note

1. The syllabus is subject to change upon notice in class and/or via Canvas postings and emails.
2. 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.

Use of Generative AI

General. Generative artificial intelligence is a form of machine learning that creates new and original output based on the data it has been trained on or has access to, employing algorithms to generate content in response to prompts. Examples of the technology include what are known as generative “large language models” (LLMs). Two well-known LLM implementations are ChatGPT and Claude. LLM output can include text, images, music, code, and more. This syllabus policy covers the textual output of generative LLMs (AI-Generated Text)—which can include computer code or programs and human-language content. Because AI-Generated Text can often mimic human intelligence, it could potentially be used as a substitute for a student's own work product. Such use is potentially problematic to the extent that it becomes a substitute for internalized student understanding of the material or creates a dependency on AI-Generated Text, which may be strictly prohibited in settings that include the bar examination.

Prohibition. Subject to the exceptions immediately below, your continuing enrollment in this course constitutes your pledge not to generate or to use any AI-Generated Text—whether from yourself or others—in relation to any assessment in this course. The term “assessment” means any graded or ungraded work product for this course that is submitted to the instructor, presented in a class session, or used in an oral or written graded assessment for this course.

Exceptions:

- You may use Generative AI for exercises related to Generative AI when specifically permitted.
- You may use Generative AI as a study aid to help you understand material better. For example, you can ask generative AI to create additional examples of mandatory v. persuasive authority or to assist in your outline for the class. This does not include creating any material that will be submitted as an assessment in the course.

UH - REQUIRED SYLLABUS ELEMENTS

A. *Mental Health and Wellness 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, 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.

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.

B. *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/>.

C. *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.

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.

The Center for Student Advocacy and Community (CSAC) is where you can go if you need help but don't know where to start. CSAC is a "home away from home" and serves as a resource hub to help you get the resources needed to support academic and personal success. Through our Cougar Cupboard, all students can get up to 30 lbs of FREE groceries a week. Additionally, we provide 1:1 appointments to get you connected to on- and off-

campus resources related to essential needs, safety and advocacy, and more. The Cougar Closet is a registered student organization advised by our office and offers free clothes to students so that all Coogs can feel good in their fit. We also host a series of cultural and community-based events that fosters social connection and helps the cougar community come closer together. Visit the CSAC homepage or follow us on Instagram: @uh_CSAC and @uhcupbrd. YOU belong here.

D. *Women and Gender Resource Center*

The mission of the WGRC is to advance the University of Houston and promote the success of all students, faculty, and staff through educating, empowering, and supporting the UH community. The WGRC suite is open to you. Stop by the office for a study space, to take a break, grab a snack, or check out one of the WGRC programs or resources. Stop by Student Center South room B12 (Basement floor near Starbucks and down the hall from Creation Station) from 9 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday.

E. *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.