

# Syllabus: Trade Secret Law

Fall 2026

## **General Information**

|                  |                                    |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| Professor        | James Beebe<br>jbeebe1@gmail.com   |
| Course           | Section 16591 – 5232 Trade Secrets |
| Meeting Schedule | Wednesdays, 5:30 – 7:15            |
| Location         | Synchronous Online                 |
| Final Exam       | TBD                                |

## **A. Learning Outcomes**

This course examines the legal and policy issues surrounding trade secrets—secret information that gives a company a competitive advantage. Students will learn how organizations identify, protect, and enforce trade secret rights through the Defend Trade Secrets Act, the Uniform Trade Secrets Act, the Economic Espionage Act, and relevant case law. The course also addresses employment-related issues, non-disclosure agreements, unfair competition, and implied obligations concerning confidential information. Because AI, digital knowledge systems, and modern employee mobility have transformed how organizational knowledge is created, governed, and misappropriated, students will learn both the classic doctrinal framework and the emerging governance-based approaches increasingly required in contemporary practice.

## **B. Course Materials**

I will provide a list of cases we will discuss and post copies on the class Canvas site. We may view and discuss scenes from the films to supplement the case discussion. I will also arrange for several guest speakers.

## **C. Office Hours**

I will be available before class and at other times by appointment. Please contact me via email at [jbeebe1@gmail.com](mailto:jbeebe1@gmail.com) to arrange a time.

## **D. Course Expectations**

### **Attendance.**

The Law Center has a minimum of 80% attendance policy for students. It is your responsibility to ensure that you attend the required number of classes. Any student who attends less than the minimum percentage of my classes will be referred to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. This class meets 1 day per week. To meet the 80% attendance policy, you may have no more than 3 absences. I realize that many who take this class, including myself, are working professionals. Thus, I will not consider those who come in late absence. However, much of the learning that occurs is due to the active exchange of ideas and information that will occur in the classroom. So,

please make every effort to be on time.

This class will be presented remotely via Zoom. Because this is a synchronous online course, the following requirements apply: (i) your computer must have a working video camera and quality audio capability; joining by audio-only will be treated as an absence (you may need an external mic or headset for sufficient audio quality); (ii) you must identify yourself with your class roll name in Zoom; (iii) your face and upper body must be visible in a professional manner on camera; (iv) you must be prepared to participate when called on to discuss cases or course materials; and (v) you must manage your microphone appropriately to maintain a professional environment. Students are expected to participate in a professional setting free from distractions, with cameras on and microphones managed appropriately throughout class.

### **Preparation**

**Please be punctual.** They say that 90% of the job is just showing up. But, as with most, and especially in the practice of law, you never want to keep your client, boss, colleague, or judge waiting. While I will not penalize you for being tardy, please be professional and respect your classmates and my time by minimizing classroom disruptions by being on time.

**Please be prepared.** I expect that you will participate when called upon. I believe that a lively and engaged discussion of the topic will lead to a better learning experience. You will not be graded or judged based on what you say, but failure to participate in classroom discussions when you are called upon may count against you in the final grading.

**Please be respectful.** During these discussions, I expect you to be respectful, civil to each other, incorporate constructive comments, and not dominate the discussion. This does not mean you cannot express your disagreement in a significant way, but you should do so using the sort of language you would use in court and in a way that displays respect for others. You should argue in class applying what I call the red face test. That is your argument would cause the judge's face to turn red, then you are not stating your case as persuasively as possible.

**Please be engaged.** There is no such thing as a stupid question in law school. So, I encourage and expect questions and participation from any student at any time. We all have our own experiences and perspectives and if we listen carefully, we can all learn from each other.

### **Use of Electronics**

Students may use laptops for note-taking or accessing course materials, but multitasking or unrelated browsing is not permitted.

### **Final Examination**

Will be administered using the EBB system. The window to take the exam will begin

on the first day of the final exam period at 8 am and will close on the last day of the final exam period at 5 pm.

**Format:** A mixture of essay, short answer, and multiple-choice questions. The exam will emphasize application of doctrine to fact patterns rather than memorization.

**Component of grade:** 100%

**Materials:** The final exam is open materials. This means any non-electronic and non-interactive materials prepared by you or others, including traditional study guides available for purchase and outlines from other students. Further details concerning the examination and any other grade evaluation mechanisms will be provided as the semester progresses.

## **E. Other Required Items**

### **1. Mental Health and Wellness Resources**

The University of Houston has several 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).

### **2. 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/>.

### **3. 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.F.D.](mailto:jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU.F.D.)

### **4. Resources for Online Learning**

The University of Houston is committed to student success and provides information to optimize the online learning experience through our Power-On website (<https://uh.edu/power-on/learning/>). Please visit this website for a comprehensive set of resources, tools, and tips including: obtaining access to the internet, AccessUH, Blackboard, and Canvas; using your smartphone as a webcam; and downloading Microsoft Office 365 at no cost. For questions or assistance, contact [UHOnline@uh.edu](mailto:UHOnline@uh.edu).

### **5. 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 recordings for their own studying and notetaking. Instructor 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.

### **6. 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.

### **7. 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 of 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 unless specified as an exception below. The parts of the Honor Code that refer to unauthorized materials or aid are specifically prohibited from any use of AI Generated Text in this course unless specified as an exception below.

The following activities are exceptions to the immediately preceding paragraph; the intent of these exceptions is to allow use of AI Generated Text for specifically and narrowly defined activities in relation to this course:

- Creating content for an outline that you use to summarize the course content
- “conversing” with the AI Generated Text software system to create hypotheticals to better understand course content, alone or with others
- checking text drafted by you for misspellings, grammar and punctuation errors, strength and clarity of prose, verbosity, effective transitional language and thesis sentences, word choice, excessive passive voice, and like things

## **8. UH Email**

Please check and use your CougarNet email for communications related to this course. Faculty use the CougarNet email to respond to course-related inquiries such as grade queries or progress reports for reasons of FERPA. To access your CougarNet email, login to your Microsoft 365 account with your CougarNet credentials. Visit University Information Technology (UIT) for instructions on how to connect your CougarNet e-mail on a mobile device.

## **9. Webcams**

Access to a webcam is required for students participating remotely in this course. Webcams must be turned on during class sessions to support engagement and discussion

### **10. Security Escorts and Cougar Ride**

UHPD continually works with the University community to make the campus a safe place to learn, work, and live. The security escort service is designed for the community members who have safety concerns and would like to have a Security Officer walk with them, for their safety, as they make their way across campus. Based on availability either a UHPD Security Officer or Police Officer will escort students, faculty, and staff to locations beginning and ending on campus. If you feel that you need a Security Officer to walk with you for your safety, please call 713-743-3333. Arrangements may be made for special needs.

Parking and Transportation Services also offers a late-night, on-demand shuttle service called “Cougar Ride” that provides rides to and from all on-campus shuttle stops, as well as the MD Anderson Library, Cougar Village/Moody Towers and the UH Technology Bridge. Rides can be requested through the UH Go app. Days and hours of operation can be found at <https://uh.edu/af-university-services/parking/cougar-ride/>.

### **11. Syllabus Changes**

Please note that I may need to make modifications to the course syllabus. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through. I will make the announcement in class and by email.

## G. Reading Assignments (Subject to revision)

Additional materials may be provided to reflect recent developments in AI, digital knowledge systems, and employee mobility. Guest speakers may include practitioners working in trade secret litigation, cybersecurity governance, AI governance, or employment mobility.

| Date         | Topic                                                                                    |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| August 26    | Topic 1: Introduction                                                                    |
| September 2  | Topic 2: What can be a trade secret?                                                     |
| September 9  | Topic 3: Public Availability and Secrecy                                                 |
| September 16 | Topic 4: The Economic Value Requirement                                                  |
| September 23 | Topic 5: Reasonable Efforts to Maintain Secrecy<br>Guest Lecturer: TBD                   |
| September 30 | Topic 6: Misappropriation: Improper Means                                                |
| October 7    | Topic 7: Misappropriation: Duty of Confidentiality                                       |
| October 14   | Topic 8: Management of Trade Secrets<br>Guest Lecturer: TBD                              |
| October 21   | Topic 9: Protecting Trade Secrets in the Employment Context<br>Guest Lecturer: TBD       |
| October 28   | Topic 10: Litigation Tactics and Defenses<br>Guest Lecturer: TBD                         |
| November 4   | Topic 11: Remedies for Trade Secret Misappropriation                                     |
| November 11  | Topic 12: Damages<br>Guest Lecturer: TBD                                                 |
| November 18  | Topic 13: Criminal Consequences for Trade Secret Misappropriation<br>Guest Lecturer: TBD |

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| TBA | Final Exam |
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