

Intermediate Legal Research

2 credits

Course Info	Contact Info	Student Hours
Intermediate Legal Research Mondays 4-5:50pm Room TBD	Alyson Drake adrake2@central.uh.edu Office: 421E in the Law Library (ask for me at the Circulation Desk & they'll direct you)	I maintain an open door policy, so please feel free to stop by anytime. Office Hours TBD or by appointment Student hours are both in person and via Zoom

Welcome to Intermediate Legal Research

I'm so glad you're here! I look forward to working with you this semester to improve your research and analysis skills. Attorneys spend approximately 35% of their time on legal research, so the goal of this course is to help you be practice-ready from day one.

This class may feel a little different from a lot of the other classes you've taken. The first reason is that this is a simulation course, focusing on learning by doing. In each class, you'll simulate work you could do as a practicing attorney. Sometimes, this makes this class seem like more work, but really it's just a different type of work than you're doing in many of your other courses. The second reason is this course is designed on principles of learning science to help you retain your new knowledge and skills in the long term. As such, we may do some activities that feel different from other courses.

How to Succeed in Intermediate Texas Legal Research

Every student can succeed in this class, because legal research is a skill everyone improves at with effort and practice. Here are a few tips that will help you succeed:

1. **Be professional.** Come to class on time, with all the materials you need ready to go. Turn in your best work, on time, every time. Participate actively in all class discussions and activities. Remember your classmates are your future colleagues; treat them accordingly. All members of this class should feel supported, respected, and included.
2. **Be positive.** Legal research is difficult. In Intermediate Legal Research, you'll likely encounter research that differs from other research you've done before. Just like anyone learning new skills, you'll stumble at times. Embrace your mistakes. Learn from them. The more you practice your research, the better you're get at it.
3. **Be present.** Attendance is required. Because we have so much material to cover, more than 2 unexcused absences will result in a deduction to your final grade. *However, I understand that things can and will come up.* Just be communicative and email ahead

of class if you can.

4. **Be proactive.** This is a professional environment, which means you must take responsibility for your learning. I'm always happy to answer questions, but despite my best efforts, I can't always tell when a student has questions or concerns if they don't share them with me. *So if you need help, please ask. That's what I'm here for.*

Learning Objectives/What Will You Be Learning?

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Evaluate the reliability of information including its authority, credibility, currency, and authenticity
- Design a successful research strategy, including selecting appropriate sources, creating effective searches, and refining your strategy when needed
- Critically select and efficiently locate the most appropriate sources for a research problem, considering time, cost, and availability of resources
- Confirm and validate your research results
- Summarize and consolidate your research findings and communicate them orally and in writing

First and Foremost

Basic Needs Statement

We learn as whole people. To learn effectively you must first have security: a roof over your head, a safe place to sleep, enough food to eat. If you're having trouble with any of these, please talk with me or with the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. Together we can make sure those needs are met.

Mental Health & Wellness

The last two academic years have been unprecedented in many ways, making learning more collectively difficult than ever before. Many of us are working and learning from places of anxiety, uncertainty, an awareness of social injustice, anger, and trauma. I do not, nor do I expect you to be, immune from the challenges so many are facing. I also acknowledge some people in our community are more impacted than others. If you're struggling, please feel free to come speak to me if you feel comfortable or I can help connect you with other useful resources.

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 713-7435454 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.

Reasonable Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids

The University of Houston complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for disabled students. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, UH strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. If you believe that you have an disability requiring an academic adjustment/auxiliary aid, please contact the [Justin Dart Jr. Student Accessibility Center](#).

Anti-Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policies

UHLC and the University are committed to maintaining and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment in which students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from discrimination and sexual misconduct. If you have experienced an incident of discrimination or sexual misconduct, a confidential reporting process is available to you. For more information, please refer to the University system's [Anti-Discrimination Policy webpage](#), [Anti-Discrimination Policy](#), [Sexual Misconduct Policy webpage](#), and [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#).

Under the University 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/>.

What Course Tools Will You Need?

Textbook: There is no required textbook for this course.

Laptops: Please bring a laptop with you to each class session; we will be regularly using online subscription databases and web resources, so a laptop is necessary to participate fully in class activities. A phone isn't a sufficient substitute for a laptop in this class.

TWEN: All course materials will be housed on TWEN. Materials for each week can be found in the Weekly Materials folder; within that, materials for each week will be in a folder name for that week (ex. Week 1: Date). You will also submit assignments via TWEN.

Email: I'll communicate with you regularly by emails sent out through Blackboard. Email is a huge part of legal practice, so it's crucial that you get in the habit of frequently checking your email now. Likewise, if you email me, I will get back to you within 24 hours, usually much sooner.

How Will I Be Assessed?

1. **Research Assessments:** Over the course of the semester, you will be completing four research assignments, focusing on specific types of research. Each assignment will be comprised of some or all of the following components:
 - preliminary analysis of legal issues
 - efficiently locating and analyzing legal sources
 - logging your research
 - reflecting on your research process, and
 - summarizing and communicating their research orally and/or in writing
2. **In-Class Participation, Preparedness, and Pre-Class Work:** For many class sessions, there will be pre-class readings/videos to prepare to engage in in-class activities or short reflection entries on course content that must be completed before the class session. You will find these assignments in the Weekly Materials folders on Twen; pre-class materials are in the folder for the class date before which they are due. These pre-class assignments are ungraded, but you can lose points for participation if they are late or incomplete.

I will also monitor weekly preparedness and participation by ability to engage in in-class activities, asking and answering questions during lectures and in-class assignments, contributing to class discussions, engaging fully during in-class exercises, showing up on time with all materials ready to go. You can also show participation by asking questions outside of class/visiting office hours if you feel more comfortable participating in those environments.

3. **Research Conferences:** For two of the assignments, you will have a group or individual research conference with me. Instructions for the research conference will be included in the assignments. Your research conference grades will be factored into the corresponding research assessment, but preparedness and being on time for the conferences will factor into your participation grade.

How Will I Be Graded?

Course grades are determined by performance on the following:

- Assessment #1: 10%
- Assessment #2: 15%
- Assessment #3: 25%
- Assessment #4: 30%
- Class participation*: 20%

This course is an experiential course, intended to help make you practice-ready. As such, participation and practice are critical elements of success in this course. Examples of class participation include: asking/answering questions, meeting with the instructor during office hours or by appointment, participating fully during in-class exercises; and completing any pre-class exercises on time.

COVID & Other Policies

COVID Policies

If you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms that are clearly not related to a pre-existing medical condition, please do not come to class. Please see [Student Protocols](#) for what to do if you experience symptoms and [Potential Exposure to Coronavirus](#) if you have potentially been exposed to COVID-19.

Students are encouraged to visit the University's [COVID-19](#) website for important information including diagnosis and symptom protocols, on-campus testing, and vaccine information. Please check the website throughout the semester for updates.

Data suggests that vaccination remains the best intervention for reliable protection against COVID-19. Students are asked to familiarize themselves with pertinent [vaccine information](#) and to consult with their health care provider. The University strongly encourages all students, faculty, and staff to be vaccinated.

Syllabus Changes

Due to the changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, please note that the instructor may need to make modifications to the course syllabus and may do so at any time. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through (*specify how students will be notified of changes*).

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 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 students, 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 prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recording will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.
