

Writing Seminar: Leadership, Law & Power

Syllabus

Summer 2026

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Introductory Note: *With an online course it is very important that you read every document and e-mail/TWEN posting closely, beginning with this syllabus, to ensure that you understand all of the course assignments, procedures, and due dates. Additionally, from time to time there may be changes, reminders, and additional content sent to organize and supplement the course. You are responsible for knowing all such information. This syllabus contains important information about the organization of the course, the requirements, and your grade. This is a syllabus, not a contract, and it is subject to change. Please refer to TWEN for the most up-to-date course information.*

Seminar Description: This seminar exposes students to theories of leadership trajectories and examines structural pipelines and barriers to power within the legal profession and other fields including government, medicine, business, and more. Students will engage in a substantial research and writing project that may fulfill the UHLC writing requirement.

Learning Outcomes: Students will acquire knowledge about leadership in the legal profession and in other contexts and learn strategies to apply this knowledge. Students will develop a rich understanding of the importance of storytelling to inform and persuade, and they will acquire knowledge of numerous transformative leaders in law and other professions. Students will gain competency in research/scholarly writing, working collaboratively with their peers, and presenting their ideas. Students will, through a comprehensive writing project, hone their skills in substantive research, acquire extensive knowledge and expertise about a topic relevant to this course, and produce a high-quality scholarly research paper. Some students, with the guidance of Prof. Jefferson, may opt to develop this paper beyond the course into a work of publishable quality and/or submit it to scholarly writing competitions.

Required Materials: Two books are required (1) the casebook Jefferson & Johnson, *Leadership, Law, and Pipelines to Power* (West Academic 2023) (“LLP”) – use the code WAHOUSTON for a 15% discount + free shipping –and (2) the biography/autobiography of a leader of your choice (suggestions appear in the Appendix of LLP but you are not limited to those options). ***Registration with TWEN is also mandatory.***

Scholarly Writing Project—Final Research Paper and Presentation: Students will have the opportunity to spend time investigating an issue related to the course topic and will produce a research paper that has the option of satisfying UHLC’s scholarly writing requirement. There are several deadlines related to this project noted on the course schedule including a proposal, outline, rough draft, and final paper as well as a requirement to provide peer editing/evaluation of other classmates’ drafts. The writing assignment for this course may satisfy scholarly writing credit; adherence to the stated deadlines is essential for successful completion of this requirement. All students, whether or not they seek scholarly writing credit for this course, will be expected to comply with the deadlines for the proposal and outline and final draft as noted on the syllabus. Students will be encouraged to submit their final papers for publication in scholarly journals. ***All students also will give a formal presentation about their paper topic.*** In accordance with the

Law Center handbook, WRS papers must be at least 10,000 words, including footnotes. More specifics on the paper and presentation will be made available later in the semester.

Recommended reading for help with the writing project: I recommend that you read and follow Eugene Volokh's Academic Legal Writing book. Portions are available here: <http://www2.law.ucla.edu/volokh/writing/>. The full book is on reserve in the library.

Our Asynchronous Classroom. *The course will be taught in a fully asynchronous format, with the exception of our first week when we will meet live on Monday, June 8 from 6-9PM via Zoom.* (For students with a conflicting class at that time, please contact Professor Jefferson via email at jeffersonrk@uh.edu by June 1 to arrange an alternative.) We will not meet in person, unless you would like to set up a time to meet during my office hours. My office hours are Tuesdays 3-5PM and by appointment. I'm also (essentially) always available online via email at jeffersonrk@uh.edu

- **Each week on Wednesday morning you will receive a new “class” installment on TWEN, with an assignment due the following Tuesday by midnight.** This will include a set of recorded lectures based upon mandatory reading. You are required to complete all assigned reading and to view all lectures, in addition to completing the assignments. Some of these assignments may involve partner-based activities (which may be conducted in-person with your assigned partner or via Skype, Zoom, Teams, phone, etc.).
- **No credit will be given for late work. Do not wait until the last minute to complete your work.**
- These assignments have been designed to provide opportunity for regular and substantive interaction between the faculty member and student and among students as required by ABA Standard 306 for distance learning. I will regularly monitor your effort in the course.
- I grant permission for students currently enrolled in the course to access the video-recordings and other materials posted on TWEN solely for the purpose of participating in the course. The recordings may not be used by any person other than a student enrolled in the course or for any other purpose. Students are strictly prohibited from distributing or selling any portion of the recordings or materials.

Assessment: Assessment in this class is based upon weekly assignments/peer review assignments (30%), research project presentation (20%), and the final research paper (50%). Weekly assignments/peer review assignments are assessed as credit/no credit—you will receive full credit for good-faith completion. *Thoughtful, well-reasoned and well-edited, professional school level work is required and is a component of your grade, including on the final exam. This includes proper citation in Bluebook format for the final paper. Your assessment work product must be exclusively your own, with help from no other person or technological system; no artificial intelligence systems may be a part of your process to generate assessment work product.*

Attendance: In an online course there is, obviously, no physical “attendance.” However, you are required to keep up with the assignment schedules as set forth in the syllabus. Falling behind that schedule may result in your forced withdrawal from the course. All units must be completed, and the standards met for credit, to receive credit for the course and to be cleared to take the final. Failure to do so will result in an incomplete. You are also required to watch all course videos/lectures. **NO CREDIT WILL BE GIVEN FOR ASSIGNMENTS, SO PLEASE PLAN ACCORDINGLY FACTORING IN TIME FOR EMERGENCIES AND UNEXPECTED LIFE EVENTS.** Please note that the University's [Graduate Excused Absence Policy](#) policy allows for accommodations in

the following situations: medical illness of student or close relative, death of a close family member, legal or government proceeding that a student is obligated to attend, recognized professional and educational activities where the student is presenting, and University-sponsored activity or athletic competition. Under these policies, students must contact me for an adjusted deadline to make up any quiz, exam or other work that contributes to the course grade or a satisfactory alternative. Additional policies address absences related to [military service](#), [religious holy days](#), [pregnancy and related conditions](#), and [disability](#).

Schedule: Below is a *tentative* schedule. Note that this course begins Monday, June 8. You may wish to read your leader biography/autobiography before the summer semester begins to get it out of the way, though I will provide reading time for it as well.

- **Week 1** – Read the Introduction plus Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of LLP. (Note that this is one of the heaviest reading assignments for the course, so please allow sufficient time—casebook reading will get lighter as you progress with your own research.) Weekly Assignment due by midnight June 16.
- We will meet live via Zoom on Monday, June 8 from 6-9PM. This is our only live meeting.
- **Week 2** – Read Chapters 4-5 of LLP and the first half of your chosen leader biography/autobiography. Weekly Assignment due by midnight June 23.
- **Week 3** – Read the second half of your chosen leader biography/autobiography. Weekly Assignment due by midnight June 30.
- **Week 4** – Read Chapters 6-7 of LLP. Weekly Assignment + Recorded Leader Presentation due by midnight July 7.
- **Week 5** – Read Chapters 8-9 of LLP. Weekly Assignment + Paper Topic, Outline with Annotated Sources due by midnight July 14.
- **Week 6** – Read Chapter 10 of LLP. Weekly Assignment by midnight July 21.
- **Week 7** – Recorded Research Presentations Group #1 (peer review assignments TBD - rough draft due with recorded presentation 7/21). Peer review feedback Google Form due by midnight July 28.
- **Week 8** – Recorded Research Presentations Group #2 (peer review assignments TBD - rough draft due with recorded presentation 7/28). Peer review feedback Google Form due by midnight August 4.
- **Week 9** – Recorded Research Presentations Group #3 (peer review assignments TBD - rough draft due with recorded presentation 7/24). Peer review feedback Google Form due by midnight August 11.
- **Week 10** – Final Paper Due by midnight 8/21.

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. 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. The State Bar also has an amazing group called Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program (web address is <https://www.tlaphelps.org/>). TLAP “provides confidential help for lawyers, law students and judges who have problems with substance abuse and/or mental health issues.” Students can call (24 hours a day/7 days a week) to get help with mental health and substance abuse issues. The number is (800) 343-8527.

Accessibility and Accommodations. UHLC is committed to ensuring that all students enjoy equal access and full participation. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on a disability (including any chronic or temporary medical or mental health condition), please feel free to reach out to me so that we may discuss options. If you require any support services, please contact the Center for Students with DisABILITIES. If you observe religious or cultural holidays that will coincide with synchronous class sessions, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we may make arrangements.

Anti-Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policies. UHLC and the University of Houston are committed to maintaining and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where 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, available at https://uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/_docs/sam/01/1d7.pdf, and Sexual Misconduct Policy, available at https://uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/_docs/sam/01/1d8.pdf. Please be aware that under the sexual misconduct policy, faculty and other University employees are required to report to the University any information received regarding sexual misconduct as defined in the policy. Due to this reporting requirement, faculty members and other employees are not a confidential resource. The reporting obligations under the sexual misconduct policy extends to alleged conduct by University employees and students.

UH Required Syllabus Provisions

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/others 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. 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.