

# CURRICULUM

## LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR GRADUATES OF HOUSTON COLLEGE OF LAW

Houston College of Law strives to offer a rigorous program of legal education designed to teach its graduates the knowledge, skills, and professionalism needed for the practice of law and to prepare them for admission to law practice. The law school's goal is to educate its graduates to become responsible members of the legal profession dedicated to providing highly competent, effective, and ethical legal representation for their clients.

To achieve those objectives, the faculty of the law school has identified the Learning Outcomes described below. Taken together, these Learning Outcomes describe the faculty's expectations for the knowledge, skills, and professionalism Houston College of Law students should have when they graduate. Every course in the law school curriculum is designed to contribute to the attainment of some, but not all, of these Learning Outcomes, and each course will emphasize a particular subset of them.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### *Learning Outcome 1: Substantive Law and Legal Process Knowledge*

Graduates of the law school will demonstrate mastery of the foundational areas of legal knowledge and legal processes with the proficiency suitable for a competent entry-level practitioner.

#### *Learning Outcome 2: Legal Analysis, Reasoning, and Problem Solving*

Graduates of the law school will demonstrate the ability to perform legal analysis, legal reasoning, and legal problem solving with the proficiency suitable for a competent entry-level practitioner.

#### *Learning Outcome 3: Legal Research*

Graduates of the law school will be able independently to conduct effective legal research with the proficiency suitable for a competent entry-level practitioner.

#### *Learning Outcome 4: Other Professional Skills, Including Effective Communication*

Graduates of the law school will be able to perform such other professional skills as are appropriate for a new lawyer in their chosen areas of specialization with proficiency appropriate for a competent entry-level practitioner.

#### *Learning Outcome 5: Professional and Ethical Responsibility*

Graduates of the law school will be able to demonstrate an ability to exercise the professional judgment and ethical standards expected of a competent entry-level practitioner.

#### *Learning Outcome 6: Self-Management and Collaboration*

Graduates of the law school will be able to use the skills and concepts required for the effective and efficient management of law practice with the proficiency suitable for a competent entry-level practitioner.

## REQUIRED COURSES AND COURSE SEQUENCE

A student will not be permitted to enroll in an elective, upper-level required course, summer- or semester-abroad program unless that student has completed or is concurrently enrolled in the first 39 hours of required courses.

- » Civil Procedure
- » Constitutional Law
- » Contracts I and II
- » Criminal Law
- » Evidence
- » Federal Income Taxation
- » Legal Research and Writing I and II
- » Property I and II
- » Torts I and II

If a student receives a failing grade in any of these required courses, the student must retake such course or courses not later than the next semester that the course is offered and the student is enrolled. The student may be permitted to complete courses for which the student is registered if the failing grade is posted after a semester has started, subject to the Academic Deficiency Policy.

### FIRST 39 HOURS

All students are required to complete the following courses with a passing grade in order to be eligible to receive the Doctor of Jurisprudence degree:

#### Full Time Students\*

##### First Semester

Civil Procedure	04
Contracts I	03
Criminal Law	03
Legal Research and Writing I	02
Torts I	03
<b>Total hours</b>	<b>15</b>

##### Second Semester

Constitutional Law	04
Contracts II*	03
Legal Research and Writing II	02
Property I	03
Torts II*	03
<b>Total hours</b>	<b>15</b>

##### Third Semester

Evidence*	03
Federal Income Taxation*	03
Property II*	03
<b>Total hours (plus 3-6 hours of electives)</b>	<b>15</b>

\* Some second and third semester required courses are offered in the summer session for full-time day division students who wish to enroll.

\*\* Part-time students are required to attend in their first summer session. Those who are unable to do so must request an exception and set up individual programs in consultation with the Registrar. Note: The summer session is the only time that Contracts II and Torts II are offered in the evening.

#### Part Time Students

##### First Year Fall

Contracts I	03
Legal Research and Writing I	02
Torts I	03
<b>Total hours</b>	<b>08</b>

##### First Year Spring

Civil Procedure	04
Criminal Law	03
Legal Research and Writing II	02
<b>Total hours</b>	<b>09</b>

##### First Year Summer\*\*

Contracts II	03
Torts II	03
<b>Total hours</b>	<b>06</b>

##### Second Year Fall

Constitutional Law	04
Evidence	03
Property I	03
<b>Total hours</b>	<b>10</b>

##### Second Year Spring

Federal Income Taxation	03
Property II	03
<b>Total hours (plus 3-5 hours)</b>	<b>09-11</b>

Students will be administratively assigned to sections of their first 39 hours of required courses. Students may not deviate from their assigned pattern.

#### UPPER-LEVEL REQUIRED COURSES

*Professional Skills Requirement:* Each student is required to take at least six (6) credit hours of lawyering skills coursework. The student may choose from any course listed as a skills course on the semester course schedule and in the course descriptions available via the [Course Listings](#) page. These courses include simulation and advocacy courses, clinics, internships, and such other courses as may be added from time to time.

*Professional Responsibility:* *Professional Responsibility is a required course and must be completed no later than the semester or session in which a student completes his or her 60th credit hour.*

*Substantial Writing Requirement (after completion of 45 hours): In addition to Legal Research and Writing I and II, each student is required to complete a substantial research paper as a condition of graduation.* The requirement for this paper may be satisfied by completion of at least one of the following:

1. A seminar where a research paper of not less than 5,000 words of text, exclusive of footnotes and tabular material, plus footnotes appropriate for a paper of publishable quality, is the basis for a grade and the grade received in the seminar is C or better; or
2. Supervised Research under the direction of a full-time faculty member with the resulting research paper receiving a grade of C or better;
3. Satisfaction of all the requirements for academic credit for *Law Review*, including completion of all writing requirements and a minimum of four semesters' enrollment; or
4. Satisfaction of all the requirements for academic credit for *CURRENTS: Journal of International Economic Law*, including completion of all writing requirements and a minimum of two semesters' service.

*Note: All required courses for graduation must be taken in residence unless such courses were accepted when the student transferred into the college.*

### ELECTIVE COURSES

For those students choosing electives during the second and third years of study, the following courses are recommended because of their relationship to topics tested for the bar examination:

» Administration of Estates and Guardianships	2 hours
» Agency and Partnership	3 hours
» Consumer Transactions	3 hours
» Corporations	3 hours
» Criminal Procedure	4 hours
» Family Law	3 hours
» First Amendment Law	2 hours
» Marital Property and Homestead	3 hours
» Oil, Gas and Mineral Law	3 hours
» Payment Systems	3 hours
» Secured Transactions	3 hours
» Texas Criminal Procedure	2 hours
» Texas Pretrial Procedure	3 hours
» Texas Trial and Appellate Procedure	3 hours
» Wills, Trusts and Estates	3 hours

*Note: Possible bar crossover questions may come from Federal Income Taxation (already a basic required course), Estate and Gift Taxation, Business Bankruptcy and Consumer Bankruptcy and Debt Collection (all elective courses).*

*Note: Statements of frequency and timing of course offerings are not binding; they indicate past patterns which may be helpful to the user.*

*Note: In certain instances, a course prerequisite may be waived or taken concurrently if a student demonstrates sufficient prior knowledge and/or experience to warrant such consideration. A student seeking course prerequisite consideration must complete the Motion for Exception to Academic Regulations form, available in the Registrar's Office, prior to registration.*

These courses normally are offered in a standard format with a final exam, but from time to time one or more of these may be graded at least in part on a project or paper, as set forth in the Schedule of Courses for that semester.

## SKILLS COURSES

Skills courses fall into three categories: (1) *advocacy, drafting, research and simulation courses*; (2) *academic externships*; and (3) *direct representation clinics*. *Note: statements of frequency and timing of course offerings are not binding; they indicate past patterns which may be helpful to the user.*

*Skills limitations:*

- » Students may enroll in and receive credit toward graduation for only one trial advocacy course (*Civil Trial Advocacy, Criminal Trial Advocacy, or Family Law Trial Advocacy*).
- » Students are limited to an aggregate maximum of nine (9) semester hours credit in the Direct Representation Clinics, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Clinics, and Academic Externships.
- » Students may enroll in and receive credit toward graduation for only one transaction skills capstone course (*corporate, energy, international business, or real estate*).
- » Students may enroll in and receive credit toward graduation for only one of the following: Commercial Real Estate Finance Practice, Contract Building Blocks, or Contract Negotiation and Drafting.

### **Advocacy, Drafting, Research and Simulation Courses**

*Note: Students may receive credit toward graduation for only one trial advocacy course (Civil Trial Advocacy, Criminal Trial Advocacy, or Family Law Trial Advocacy). (See also Dropping Advocacy Courses, below.)*

***Dropping Advocacy Courses:*** Drops after the first day of classes result in adverse consequences to your professor and classmates, who are depending on the active participation of every registered student. Accordingly, a student will not be allowed to drop an advocacy course (*Appellate, Civil Pretrial, Civil Trial and Criminal Trial*) or other clinical course after the first day of classes, except with express written permission of the professor. If the professor does not give permission and a student chooses not to fulfill his/her class obligations, the student will be given a grade of “F” for the course.

### **The Clinical Program**

The Clinical Program at Houston College of Law offers three types of experiential learning: Academic Externships (*seven classes*), Direct Representation Clinics (*fifteen classes*), and Community-Based Clinics (*two classes*). Successful participation in any of these clinics satisfies a student’s professional skills course requirement. The Randall O. Sorrels Legal Clinics are housed on the 10th floor.

Students may take a maximum of nine (9) semester credit hours in the Clinical Program. All clinics are graded on a pass/fail basis (*i.e.* honors pass, pass, low pass, or fail). Credit hours vary from two to four credits, depending on the class. Most clinics are offered in both the Spring and Fall semesters; a smaller number are offered in the summer session. Some clinics have prerequisite courses. Most require that students have completed 45 semester hours.

### **Academic Externships**

*Note: Students are limited to an aggregate maximum of nine (9) semester hours credit in the direct representation clinics, community-based clinic, and academic externships.*

Academic Externships are normally offered in the fall, spring, and summer.

### **Requirements For All Placements**

Students wishing to participate in an Academic Externship are encouraged to communicate with Assistant Dean Elizabeth Dennis or Associate Dean Catherine Burnett before registering. The deans will provide guidance in exploring the many available options for field placements to help the student choose a placement that best satisfies his or her professional and personal goals. Prior to registration in an externship, students must submit a written approval from the Clinical Programs office. If the field placement is in a new setting initiated by the student, the form must be approved by Assistant Dean Dennis or Associate Dean Burnett prior to registration. These forms are available in the Clinical Programs office, Room 1035T, and on STANLEY. Existing placement opportunities are also available there, and offerings are available in a wide variety of practice areas.

All clinical students participate in a weekly seminar which draws upon their experience in the field, focuses on essential lawyering skills and values, and enriches the students' understanding of legal institutions and the work of the lawyer. In Judicial Process Clinic I, the weekly seminar is conducted online.

If a student is completing field work in one semester, but is unable to participate in the externships seminar until the following semester, the student may submit to the Office of the Registrar a request for exception to the academic rules and policies. An example of a relevant circumstance is field work in an out-of-town location.

In addition to the seminar, all students must write a reflective weekly journal that demonstrates their perceptions and insights about the work experience, the lawyering process, the experience of clients, and other issues. Journals must be filed immediately after the week worked; no retroactive credit will be given if weekly journals are not filed concurrently. At least one private conference with the professor is required, as are weekly timesheets signed by the attorney/supervisor.

No academic credit is awarded for placement with a for-profit entity, such as a law firm, corporation, or sports franchise, but many opportunities for transactional practice experience are nonetheless available. No student may receive compensation for work performed in an academic externship. All students must spend at least eight (8) hours per week at their field placement. Sixty (60) hours of work are required for each credit hour received. Students may begin their work no more than one (1) week before the start of the semester in which they are enrolled.

Students participating in an academic externship for a second semester must register for a different placement type; *e.g.*, a legal services provider and a state court, a federal court and a district attorney’s office, etc., and are not required to attend the weekly seminar.

*Academic Externship Seminar*

All academic externships with the exception of Judicial Process I require enrollment in the Academic Externship Seminar: Lawyering Skills and Professional Values. The seminar syllabus is based on the joint ABA/AALS Mac-Crate Report; and students are introduced to the skills of interviewing and counseling clients, preparing clients for mediation, negotiation techniques and strategies, case evaluation, and effective law office management through role plays, lectures, and class discussion.

<i>Externships Provided</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>
Criminal Process Clinic	3 or 4 hours
Government Process Clinic	3 or 4 hours
Hospital Law Externship	3 or 4 hours
International Process Clinic	Maximum of 6 hours
Judicial Process Clinic I	2 hours
Judicial Process Clinic II	2 or 3 hours
Public Interest Clinic	3 or 4 hours

**Direct Representation Clinics**

Presently, the law school offers fifteen direct representation clinics for two or three semester hours credit. Clinics are typically offered in both the fall and spring semesters, although a few are offered only once per year. A smaller number, usually in the civil practice area, are offered in the summer. The Clinics are located on the 10th floor.

All direct representation clinics are graded honors pass, pass, low pass, or fail. Successful completion of a direct representation clinic counts towards the student’s aggregate maximum of nine (9) semester hours credit in the clinical programs and also satisfies a student’s professional skills course requirement. Absent unusual circumstances, a student may not repeat the same clinic in a

subsequent semester.

Enrollment in each clinic is limited. Participating students are expected to contribute 50 working hours in the clinic for each hour of academic credit. Class meetings are a vital part of each clinic and help to develop the student's familiarity with the substantive law as well as to hone lawyering skills and develop case specific strategies.

All of the clinics involve direct representation of, or advocacy for, real people involved in real matters in controversy. Many of the clinics receive external funding to support the delivery of civil legal services and have strict income and case-type eligibility criteria.

The Civil Practice Clinics are a specific unit with the Direct Representation Clinics designed to provide hands-on experience and training relevant to solo and small firm practitioners in the areas of family law, estate planning and probate law, child welfare law, and veterans' issues. A full-time professional staff of attorneys and support personnel work together with faculty and students in these clinics.

<i>Direct Representation Clinics Provided</i>	<i>Course Credit</i>
Access to Justice Clinic - Community Education	2 hours
Actual Innocence Clinic	3 hours
Asylum/Human Trafficking Clinic	3 hours

<i>Civil Practice Clinics Provided</i>	<i>Course Credit</i>
Family Law Clinic - Basic	2 hours
Family Law Clinic - Advanced	3 hours
Probate Clinic – Post-Death Property Transfer	3 hours
Guardianship Clinic	2 hours
Estate Planning Clinic	2 hours
Domestic Violence Clinic	3 hours

*Pilot Clinics: Two semester hours credit, usually offered in the fall and spring semesters, maximum of twelve (12) students per clinic*

Offered on an experimental basis, these clinics have a discrete class component and are typically targeted to a specific portion of the population or a particular kind of legal issue. Examples include Immigration, Patent, Veteran's, Trademark and Tax. A community-based pilot clinic is the Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Law Clinic, which involves a two-semester commitment and student applications and selection interviews.



## Alternative Dispute Resolution Clinics

<i>Alternative Dispute Resolution Clinic(s) Provided</i>	<i>Course Credit</i>
Mediation Clinic	3 or 4 hours

### SEMINARS

*Note: In certain instances, a course prerequisite may be waived or taken concurrently if a student demonstrates sufficient prior knowledge and/or experience to warrant such consideration. A student seeking course prerequisite consideration must complete the Motion for Exception to Academic Regulations form, available in the Registrar's Office, prior to registration. All seminars are offered periodically for two semester hours credit. Unless the schedule of courses for that semester states otherwise, each seminar will fulfill the advanced writing requirement by having the grade based on a research paper of not less than 5,000 words of text exclusive of footnotes and tabular materials, plus such footnotes appropriate for a paper of publishable quality, and the grade received in the seminar is C or better. A paper of at least this length is required whether or not a student is enrolled in the seminar for the fulfillment of the advanced writing requirement.*

Seminars are designed to foster in-depth research of specialized areas of the law. Enrollment is limited. A student must have satisfactorily completed 45 semester hours, plus completion or concurrent enrollment in all required courses (*with the exception of the substantial writing credit*). Additional prerequisites are stated in the course description. Preparation and presentation of a paper are usually required. A maximum of three seminars (*including Supervised Research and non-paper or project seminars*) may be applied toward graduation or be included in calculating the student's grade point average.

### COURSE LISTINGS, COURSE DESCRIPTIONS, BOOKS & MATERIALS

The [Course Listings](#) page is a searchable resource that provides course details, descriptions, prerequisites, and information regarding books for selected courses. Courses are searchable by term, course name, professor, and course type (*e.g.* bar courses, skills courses, paper seminars).

Students may click the bookstore link for an open course to view and purchase the required textbooks and/or supplements required for the selected course. Please contact the [Campus Bookstore](#) at (713) 646-1756 with questions regarding textbook availability.

### PATHWAYS TO PRACTICE

Houston College of Law offers a wide array of courses to prepare you for the practice of law, including nearly fifty skills courses and other experiential learning opportunities, as well as hundreds of potential internships for credit. Both the breadth of courses and our longstanding emphasis on skills-based training provides students with unique opportunities to prepare themselves for practice in numerous legal fields.

Designing a curriculum that suits you among all these options, however, can be a daunting task without guidance. You need to understand how all of these course options and skills-based opportunities could coincide with your interests, strengths, and objectives. Indeed, you might even find that you are interested in legal fields and areas of practice that you didn't even know existed (or only understood on a very general level).

Pathways to Practice is designed to help fill these gaps for current and prospective students. The professors here at Houston College of Law have created pathways and accompanying materials for sixteen different subjects. Fifteen of them concern specific areas or types of practice and the other subject being Texas Bar Examination. For more information visit <http://pathways.hcl.edu/>.