



Honors College Mentored Research Experience
BLAW 3996
Spring 2026 (January 12, 2026, to May 8, 2026)

Instructor information

Adam T. Whitten

- Email address: adam.whitten@unt.edu
 - Please include the class section “3996” or “Honors Project” in the subject line.
 - Canvas messages and email will be the best way to contact me, although never assume that just because you have sent me an email that I have received it. I will endeavor to answer each email as soon as possible. If you have not had a response to your question within 36 hours, it will not hurt my feelings if you send me a brief reminder.
 - Feel free to also find me on MS Teams and send a text/chat
- Office Location: Business Leadership Building 367B
- Office Telephone: 940-565-3054
 - If I am unavailable when you call, please leave a voice message with a brief message, including a callback number.

Class time and location

Class time: Thursday 6:30 pm to 9:20 pm

Class location: Business Leadership Building BLB 055

Student hours

- **Wednesday 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm in-person**
 - This is time for you to drop in and ask questions about the material (or really anything!). You do not need to make an appointment with me for this time. It will be first come, first served.
- **Thursday 4:30 pm – 5:30 pm Zoom**
 - This time is set aside for the students in my online sections, so I will provide them with priority. That means that if we are working on something but an online student logs in, I will need to set aside what we are working on to address the online student’s needs. But if no one attends I will be glad to work with you.
- **By appointment (in-person or Zoom)**
 - We can coordinate a time to meet one-on-one that works for us both.

What we'll be learning

This is a individual research experience conducted by an honors student with at least junior standing under the supervision of a faculty member..

How we'll learn together

We will meet regularly via Zoom or in person to discuss your progress and review your work.

How to demonstrate your learning

The course objectives of BLAW 3996 are:

1. Learn legal research skills.
2. Present proposed solutions to the issues you raise in your project topic.
3. To improve oral and written communication skills.

What Book You Need

- There is no required textbook. Students will engage in guided independent research using a variety of sources.

How to Succeed in this Course

The most important action you can take to succeed is to do at least a little bit every day. Law is, usually, not something students can pack into an all-nighter or “cram” session.

The other most important action you can take is to stay connected with me and your classmates. I maintain regular student hours (which you may have also called office hours) for you to come in without an appointment to discuss any class-related issues you may have. And I'm glad to make appointments that fit our respective schedules if these times do not work.

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 - We can coordinate a time to meet one-on-one that works for us both.

What are some reasons to stop by during student hours? You can ask for clarification on content or an assignment, help me get to know you better as a learner/person, discuss career paths you may be considering, or any number of reasons. Your success is my goal! Note that student hours are not the time to take missed notes. I expect you to bring substantive questions after you have attempted the material.

I welcome both Canvas messages and emails. I prefer Canvas messages over email simply because it helps keep me a little more organized. If you do email me (which is encouraged!), you must use your UNT email when reaching out to me; I will not respond to non-UNT email addresses. You must include the course and section in the subject line or I may not respond to your email.

Although I try to check my email at least twice a day, I do not always check emails at frequent intervals during the day, or I may not have time to provide a full response. Nevertheless, I make every effort to respond to an email within 24 business hours during weekdays.

If you send me an email after 5:00 p.m., I will most likely not respond until the next business day. During busy times, my inbox becomes rather full, so if you contact me and do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated!

Some other things to keep in mind:

1. DO read the syllabus and the assignment guidelines carefully. I do my best to lay everything out for you all in those documents. If you read and follow them carefully, you will successfully complete all the major requirements for the course.
2. This class is run through Canvas. You MUST check your Canvas regularly. I will send class emails to your Canvas account so you either need to access that account regularly or forward your email to another account that you use. You will miss extremely valuable information if you do not check the notices I send.
3. At the end of the semester, do NOT ask me to change your grade. That would be unethical and unfair to every student that has earned his/her given grade.
4. I am here for you. Please consult with me with any questions or concerns. I want each of you to enjoy this class and learn the material. Success in this course your choice! If you choose to be successful, I will be happy to help you. If you do not choose to be successful, I will honor your choice. Every student has the potential to succeed in this class.
5. If you ever have any questions about anything in the assignment guidelines or other course documents, ASK! I want to help you do well in this class and providing clarification to you all is one way for me to do that.

Our learning community

It is my goal to create an inclusive learning environment. Every student should feel supported in sharing their unique perspective and be treated with respect. You are an integral part of our learning community, and your viewpoint and perspective are valuable to your fellow learners. Through our group discussions, you'll have opportunities for collaboration, so your participation is essential to not only your learning but your fellow team members. For you and your teammates to get the most out of the course, please do your part by participating fully, sharing your insights, and doing so by the deadlines provided. When connecting with me and your fellow students, please keep an open mind and communicate in a respectful manner. We don't all have to agree, but we can learn from one another's unique perspectives. I encourage you to review UNT's student code of conduct so that we can all start with the same baseline of understanding.

AI Use Policy

Students may use Artificial Intelligence tools (for example, Chat-GPT, Microsoft Copilot, Claude AI, or Google NotebookLM) as aids when studying for this course (I particularly like Google NotebookLM) I find these tools useful in my personal and professional roles, so students are likewise able to make use of these tools. Students should never use AI tools as substitutes for a student's critical engagement with the material. The best use of AI tools in this class will be as supplements to classroom learning.

It is critically important to remember that AI tools are not trained attorneys and do not understand the nuances of the legal concepts we will encounter in this course. Please note, at the time of the publication of this syllabus, AI tools have a tendency to produce inaccurate or incomplete outputs and dispense incorrect facts and fake citations. Image generation models tend to not product complete images with text and often produce highly offensive work product. If you choose to use generative AI in this course, you will remain responsible for any inaccurate, biased, offensive, or otherwise unethical content you consult or submit, regardless of whether it originates from you directly or generative AI.

There are numerous examples of attorneys using AI tools uncritically, which have resulted in embarrassing at best and sanctionable at worst consequences. (See e.g., [Lawyers in Walmart lawsuit admit AI 'hallucinated' case citations \(Reuters\)](#), [Another lawyer faces ChatGPT trouble \(Legal Cheek\)](#), and [ChatGPT: US lawyer admits using AI for case research \(BBC\)](#)).

AI tools cannot be trusted to provide correct answers to direct questions about the work we will be encountering. Students should be mindful of the limitations of these tools in the context of our classroom. Moreover, because these AI tools continue to “learn” based on

their inputs, questions posed must be the students' own questions and thoughts, built off the material we cover. Therefore, to encourage student learning and success, I think it is important to set a clear guideline for the misuse and use of these tools.

As to the misuse of AI tools, there are some situations where student use of AI tools is not only counterproductive but actively harmful, to both student learning and to me and the textbook publisher. Therefore:

Students are strictly prohibited from directly inputting into any AI tool any questions from any assignments in this course (the online homework, chapter assessments, or the exams) or exact language from any class slides, the textbook, or other copyrighted material. Additionally, students are strictly prohibited from any use of AI tools where directly prohibited in assignment instructions.

Any student found to have directly input into an AI tool assessment questions or language from class slides or the textbook, either as copy–paste or even edited, or to have used AI tools where otherwise prohibited, shall be deemed to have violated UNT policy on student academic integrity ([UNT Policy 06.003](#)) as a form of “unauthorized assistance” that constitutes “cheating.” Instances of direct input of assessment questions or exact language from any class slides or the textbook into an AI tools, or any otherwise prohibited use of AI, shall be referred to the [Office of Student Success’s Academic Integrity department](#).

I have this policy for two reasons. First, the student does not own the copyrights to any material either from the textbook publisher, which owns the copyright for the textbook assignments and material, or myself, who owns the copyright to course assignments and materials I prepared. I consider direct input of assignment questions or material from class slides or the textbook to be a violation of copyright. Students are allowed to input any materials noted in the class as public domain or otherwise not copyright restricted. Second, regarding any assessment, AI simply cannot be trusted to provide a correct answer. As mentioned above, AI is not actually intelligent, especially in the context of a course on the law. Direct input of assessment questions will be actively harmful for student learning.

As to the appropriate use of AI tools, I want students to engage with the material and not simply learn to prompt AI tools for an answer without critical thinking. Therefore, students may use AI tools to generate study guides, discussion questions, summarize concepts, or even produce hypothetical situations meant to highlight the concepts we cover. AI tools can be incredibly useful as extensions of the learning environment in this

class and can benefit students through expansion and application meant to enhance your understanding.

Because we have set clear guidelines, I trust students to police themselves on their use. I therefore do not require students to disclose to me when they use AI tools. But again, any student found to have violated this policy will be reported for academic integrity violations.

Class schedule

The class schedule is below. It outlines our planned project progression and milestones.

- Weeks 1–3: Statutes & case law review
- Weeks 4–7 Comparative study
- Weeks 8–11: Identify pressure points and draft analysis
- Weeks 12–14: Refine recommendations
- Weeks 15–16: Submit final paper

CONSULT OFFICIAL, CURRENT UNIVERSITY CALENDAR FOR ADD/DROP, WITHDRAW AND OTHER KEY DATES, WHICH IS INCORPORATED HEREIN BY REFERENCE AS IF COPIED AT LENGTH HEREIN.

Students will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing that will impact a class and describe that the calendar is subject to change, citing the [Emergency Notifications and Procedures Policy \(https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-049\)](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-049).

How You Will Be Graded and Assessed

Grades will be determined according to the individualized project rubric once final formulation of the project is completed.

The following grading scale will be used:

90–100%	A
80–89%	B
70–79%	C
60–69%	D
Below 60%	F

Use Your Resources!

We all need additional support from time to time. Don't suffer in silence or feel you have to go at this alone. University life is filled with challenges! UNT has so many great resources to support you.

UNT strives to offer you a high-quality education and a supportive environment, so you learn and grow. As a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. To learn more about campus resources and information on how you can be successful at UNT, go to unt.edu/success and explore unt.edu/wellness. To get all your enrollment and student financial-related questions answered, go to scrappysays.unt.edu.

Office of Disability Access

The Office of Disability Access (ODA) can work with you on academic accommodations if needed. The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Additional Resources

I encourage you to take advantage of the many resources UNT has to offer students, including (but not limited to):

- [UNT's Counseling and Testing Services](#) can provide psychological counseling and academic testing.
- [UNTWell](#) provides FREE individual and group counseling as well as a vocational assessment.
- [UNT Food Pantry](#) is a great resource if you or someone you know experiences food insecurity.
- [Academic Success Center](#) can support you in your academics.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STANDARDS AND SANCTIONS FOR VIOLATIONS

Please note the Student Honor Code: “I commit myself to honor, integrity, and responsibility as a student representing the University of North Texas community. I understand and pledge to uphold academic integrity as set forth by UNT Student Academic Integrity Policy, 06.003 (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>). I affirm that the work I submit will always be my own, and the support I provide and receive will always be honorable.”

The G. Brint Ryan College of Business takes academic honesty seriously. So do I. Ethics and integrity are important business values, essential to building trust, and adhering to both professional and legal standards. Academic dishonesty destroys trust, damages the reputation and the value of the degree, and is unacceptable.

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions from admonition (a warning) to expulsion from the University.

Some of the most common examples of academic integrity violations include plagiarism or cheating, such as unauthorized assistance on examinations, homework, research papers, or case analyses. Your work must be entirely your own. When working on assignments, you should not discuss your work with others unless approved by the course instructor. Group assignments should only be discussed with members assigned to your group, and all group members may be held accountable in some way for known academic integrity violations in a group assignment.

Another example of academic dishonesty relates to improper attribution. When preparing your assignments, you must cite all outside sources in the manner requested by your instructor. Copying or using material from any source prepared by or previously submitted by others, at UNT or other institutions, or downloaded from the Internet, is plagiarism. Unless directed otherwise in an assignment, large scale “cutting and pasting” from other sources, even if properly footnoted, is not appropriate. You should synthesize this material in your own words and provide a footnote.

Your instructor will specify what materials, if any, may be used on the tests and exams.

Using materials other than those permitted, talking with other individuals during the exam, individuals exchanging information about an exam when one has taken the exam and the other has not, or copying or using material from another individual’s exam is academic dishonesty and will result in a meeting to discuss academic integrity violations and potentially issue sanctions mentioned above, and may result in ineligibility for academic scholarships. The use of online assistance, such as sites commonly used for finding homework solutions, group chat, cell phones, smart watches, and similar tools

during exams is not allowed for any reason unless specifically permitted. No portion of an exam may be copied or photographed without permission.

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the University's status as an institution of higher education. A student is responsible for responding to a request to discuss suspected academic dishonesty when issued by an instructor or other University official. If a student fails to respond after a proper attempt at notification has been made, the University may take appropriate academic actions in the absence of the student's participation.

According to UNT Policy 18.1.16, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Academic sanctions will range from a warning to a failing grade in the course.

ACCEPTABLE STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION – EAGLE CONNECT

Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to your Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail: eagleconnect.unt.edu/

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION & PROCEDURES

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course materials.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOR BUSINESS LEADERSHIP BUILDING:

- **Severe Weather** In the event of severe weather, all building occupants should immediately seek shelter in the designated shelter-in-place area in the building. If unable to safely move to the designated shelter-in-place area, seek shelter in a windowless interior room or hallway on the lowest floor of the building. All building occupants should take shelter in rooms 055, 070, 090, and the restrooms on the basement level or in rooms 170, 155, and restrooms 122, 182 or 183 on the first floor.
- **Bomb Threat/Fire** In the event of a bomb threat or fire in the building, all building occupants should immediately evacuate the building using the nearest exit. Once outside, proceed to the designated assembly area. If unable to safely move to the designated assembly area, contact one or more members of your department or unit to let them know you are safe and inform them of your whereabouts. Persons with mobility impairments who are unable to safely exit the building should move to a designated area of refuge and await assistance from emergency responders. All building occupants should immediately evacuate the building and proceed to the south side of Crumley Hall in the grassy area, west of parking lot 24.

RETENTION OF STUDENT RECORDS

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Blackboard online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about students' records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS (SPOT)

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 13 and 14 of the long semesters to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via *IASystem* Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the

survey, they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the spot website at www.spot.unt.edu or email spot@unt.edu

SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION, HARRASSMENT, & ASSAULT

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources_0. You are not alone. We are here to help.