

ADVOCATES

— at —

UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON** | LAW CENTER

**BLAKELY-BUTLER
MOOT COURT
COMPETITION**

LUNCH & LEARN

FALL 2023

Who are the Advocates?

- The Advocates is a UHLC student organization dedicated to improving students' oral advocacy skills.
- The Advocates host six intramural competitions for UHLC students each academic year.
- Fall 2023 Advocates Competitions:
 - Blakely-Butler Moot Court
 - Tom Newhouse Mediation
 - James J. Hippard Open Mock Trial

What is the Blakely-Butler Moot Court Competition?

- An Advocates intramural competition (independent of UHLC Moot Court team)
- Oral arguments on a fictional appellate case
- Closed research: All cases you are permitted to use are identified.
- Up to 16 two-person teams compete
- Open to all UHLC students (including 1Ls!)
- A chance to earn one hour of course credit (good-faith effort required)

Why should you compete?

- Develop your oral advocacy skills
- Network with practicing attorneys and judges who are volunteering as competition judges
- Earn course credit!
- Cash prizes for finalists
- Prize for Best Speaker in finals
- Bragging rights on your resume

2023 BLAKELY-BUTLER SCHEDULE

- **Competition rounds are in person at UHLC on Sept. 22-23.**
- **Three preliminary rounds Friday, Sept. 22, starting at 10 AM and concluding by 5 PM. Competitors must compete in all three rounds.**
- **8 teams advance to Saturday elimination rounds. Teams that advance must continue to compete. Results emailed Friday night.**
- **Quarterfinals, Semi-Finals, and Finals on Saturday beginning at 10 AM and concluding by 6 PM.**

Moot Court Competition structure

- Each team consists of two law students.
- The competition problem contains two issues on appeal. Each team member argues one issue.
- In each round, teams compete by delivering oral arguments representing opposing sides in front of one or more judges.
- Each team has 24 minutes for arguments, divided between the two team members.
- Petitioner may reserve a portion of their 24 minutes for rebuttal, upon request.
- Each team must argue each side at least once. Teams must prepare arguments as both Petitioner and Respondent.

COMPETITION STRUCTURE EXAMPLE

- **Petitioner**
 - Speaker 1 (Issue 1) – 11 minutes
 - Speaker 2 (Issue 2) – 11 minutes
- **Respondent**
 - Speaker 1 (Issue 1) – 12 minutes
 - Speaker 2 (Issue 2) – 12 minutes
- **Rebuttal**
 - One Petitioner Speaker only – 2 minutes

Note: Teams choose how to divide time. Each team member must speak at least 8 minutes. Bailiff will ask for time splits before each round begins.

HOW TO STRUCTURE YOUR ARGUMENT

- Always start with “May it please the court”
- Tell the court what you are asking them to do (affirm or reverse)
- Find a theme for your argument (“This case highlights the important principle that . . .”)
- Roadmap your argument. Choose 2-3 points about your issue and arrange them in order of importance.
- Signpost as you move through your argument (“Turning to my second point . . .”)

EXAMPLE ARGUMENT STRUCTURE

- **Example Petitioner Speaker One:** “May it please the court. Your honor, may I request two minutes for rebuttal? (pause) My name is Jane Smith, and along with my co-counsel John Doe, I represent the Petitioners, Tom and Dorothy Gale. I will address the first issue, explaining why . . . My co-counsel will address the second issue, demonstrating why . . . This case highlights the foundational principle . . . We ask this court to reverse the Fifteenth Circuit and . . . This court should reverse the Fifteenth Circuit for two reasons . . .”
- **Example Petitioner Speaker Two:** “May it please the court. As my co-counsel stated, my name is John Doe, and I will address the second issue . . .”

TIPS FOR YOUR ARGUMENT

- Know your standard of review. (de novo, clearly erroneous, abuse of discretion)
- Know the record and cite to it. (“As stated on page 3 of the record . . .”)
- Know and cite to relevant cases from list of authorities.
- Have an outline, but be ready to jump from one point to another if a judge asks a question. (“Yes, your honor, that goes to my third point . . .”)
- Anticipate questions and be ready to respond. Think of your argument as a conversation with the judges.
- As Respondent, respond to and dispute key parts of Petitioner’s argument.
- As Petitioner, request rebuttal and rebut 1-2 key parts of Respondent’s argument.

How will you be judged?

- Knowledge of the law (merit of the argument)
- Knowledge of the record (facts & issues)
- Ability to respond to questions with candor
- Public speaking ability
- Courtroom demeanor
- Persuasiveness

Public Speaking & Courtroom Demeanor

- Make eye contact with judges.
- Don't read from your outline. Use it to refresh your memory.
- Address the judge as "your honor" or by name (Judge or Justice Smith).
- If a judge begins speaking, you should stop speaking immediately. Listen to the question and respond respectfully.
- Dress and behave as if you were in court.

GETTING COURSE CREDIT

- **You must put in a good-faith effort.**
- **You must compete in three preliminary rounds.**
- **If you advance to elimination rounds, you must continue competing until you are eliminated.**
- **Complete a short writing component by Monday, October 9 at 11:59 PM.**
- **Submit a credit petition.**
- **Register for “Advocacy Competition” during course registration in a subsequent semester and pay tuition.**

WRITING COMPONENT

- Each competitor who wants course credit must complete a writing component.
 - 5-8 pages, one-inch margins, double-spaced, 12-point font
 - Appellate brief on your issue for either Petitioner or Respondent
 - Template and example will be provided.
- Must contain:
 - Cover page*
 - Table of contents*
 - Table of authorities*
 - Issues presented*
 - Statement of Facts
 - Argument Section (on your issue only, at least 4 pages)
 - Conclusion*
- * Not included in page count

REGISTRATION

- Register as a team. Each team must have two people.
- Registration opens at 12 PM Friday, September 1.
- Registration closes at 6 PM Thursday, September 7 (or earlier if full; 16 team limit).
- The problem will be released via email at 9 AM Friday, September 8.
- Registration Fees:
 - \$20 per team with two Advocates members
 - \$60 per team with one Advocates member and one nonmember
 - \$100 per team with two nonmembers
 - If you plan to compete in multiple Advocates competitions, a membership is a good investment! [Join online.](#)

HOW DO I REGISTER?

- 1.** Find a partner. Ask a friend or use the Find a Partner [sign up sheet](#).
- 2.** Make ONE team payment using the Advocates [PayPal link](#). Add a comment that payment is for Blakely-Butler Competition Registration and include each team member's name.
- 3.** Fill out the [Registration Form](#). Include your PayPal confirmation number.

QUESTIONS?

Email additional questions to Blakely-Butler Moot Court Competition Director Elizabeth “Beth” Gallaspy at eagallas@cougarnet.uh.edu.

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