Pre-Law: An Introduction to Investing in a Legal Education

Fridays, 5:20-7:50 p.m.
640 Mass Ave. Rm. TBD

Instructor
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Course Description
Individuals attend law school for a wide variety of reasons. Perhaps your desire to go to law school is a life-long dream or you’ve recently discovered a passion for the law or maybe it’s simply a back-up plan due to the competitive job market that awaits most college graduates. Regardless of why you’re contemplating a legal education, this pre-law course will lay the foundation for you to begin “thinking like a lawyer.” In the beginning of the semester, students will learn about several legal career paths (e.g., litigation, transactional, regulatory, judicial, policy/lobbying, academia, alternative) as well as discuss the pros and cons of becoming a generalist or a specialist while in law school. Students will also acquire a familiarity with and learn to distinguish different types of laws: the U.S. Constitution, federal & state law, case law, statutes, regulations, and treaties. In addition, students will develop the skills needed for a successful 1L year: perform basic legal research, write a legal memorandum, and brief a case using the IRAC method. Finally, students will conduct a self-assessment of their desire to go to law school and research their preferred law schools’ admissions statistics, employment opportunities, tuition costs, areas of specialty, etc. – culminating in an eight to ten page cost/benefit analysis and reflective essay – to determine whether applying to law school is the most advantageous next step in their education and career path.

Textbooks


A book on a specific legal career path or practice area of your choice. You can find a diverse listing of legal career books available online, including those on the following websites:

- [http://www.nalp.org/categories/?catID=14&page=all](http://www.nalp.org/categories/?catID=14&page=all)
- [http://www.americanbar.org/careercenter/career_resources.html](http://www.americanbar.org/careercenter/career_resources.html)
- [http://shop.americanbar.org/ebus/](http://shop.americanbar.org/ebus/) (under the Professional Interests topic, click on “Careers”)
- [http://www.wcl.american.edu/career/library.pdf](http://www.wcl.american.edu/career/library.pdf)

Online legal research resources: [http://www.law.georgetown.edu/library/research.guides/cases.cfm](http://www.law.georgetown.edu/library/research.guides/cases.cfm)

**Learning Objectives**

This course offers undergraduate students an introduction to the law and preparation for study at an ABA-accredited law school, with the following learning objectives (goals):

- To acquire an understanding of the various broad types of legal career paths – litigation, transactional, regulatory, judicial, policy/lobbying, academia, or alternative careers
  - Students will read excerpts of a legal career book of their own choosing and then present their findings to the entire class.
- To gain proficiency in the difference between case law, statutes, regulations, and treaties
  - Students will read each type of law to dissect the differences in authority, structure, and content.
- To develop the requisite skills needed to read and brief a case accurately and efficiently
  - Students will read federal cases and brief each using the IRAC (Issue, Rule, Application, Conclusion) method of analysis.
- To adopt the requisite skills needed to perform legal research and write a legal memorandum
  - Students will be assigned a legal research project. After performing the research, students will write a legal memorandum for a fictional managing partner.
- To gain an understanding of the importance of international law and administrative law and how each can be prevalent in modern-day practice
  - Students will define both areas of the law and become familiar with how attorneys might interact with international or administrative law within their practice.
- To perform a detailed cost/benefit analysis to conclude whether or not to apply to law school, based on research and the subsequent insight that is gained
  - Students will conduct a self-assessment and research about their preferred law schools’ admissions statistics, employment opportunities, tuition costs, areas of specialty, etc. – this research will be used to develop a cost/benefit analysis and to write a reflective essay about their decision to (or not to) apply to law school.

The course’s principal topics include the following subject areas:

- Exploring different legal career paths
- Understanding different types of law and legal authority
- How to conduct legal research
Written Assignments
Students will submit three formal writing assignments for this course. For the first writing assignment (due on Friday, January 30, 2015; 15% of the grade), students will need to conduct an informational interview with a practicing attorney (preferably someone who is also an alumnus of their top choice law school) and write a five-page essay reflecting on the experience and the knowledge they've gathered from it. The second writing assignment (due on Friday, March 27, 2015; 40% of the grade) will require students to research a legal issue and write a five to eight-page legal memorandum for a fictional managing partner. Lastly, for the third writing assignment (due on Friday, May 8, 2015; 25% of the grade), students will write an eight to ten-page reflective essay regarding their desire to attend law school. In addition to conducting an in-depth self-assessment, students will need to research their preferred law schools’ admissions statistics, employment opportunities, tuition costs, areas of specialty, etc. Students will utilize the results of their self-assessment and research to perform a cost/benefit analysis to determine whether or not applying to law school is the best next step in their education and career path.

Students agree that by taking this course the three aforementioned writing assignments will be subject to submission for a Textual Similarity Review on Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be added as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers in the future. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site. To access Turnitin.com, you will need to use the following credentials:

ID: 6833215
Password: lawSpring15

On or before the due date, each paper will need to be submitted on Turnitin.com before 5:20 p.m. when class is set to commence. Late papers will not be accepted unless the student has a written medical excuse from a medical practitioner, urgent care, or hospital.

American Bar Association (ABA) Weekly Reaction Papers: Each Friday, students will receive the “ABA Journal Weekly Newsletter” via e-mail. Students should choose either one of the journal stories or a blog entry (found at http://www.abajournal.com/blawgs) as the topic of their reaction paper. Reaction papers should (1) include a hyperlink to the original ABA source (2) be at least two double-spaced typed pages and (3) will be due at the beginning of each class. The first reaction paper will be due January 16, 2015 and on every Friday, at the beginning of class, thereafter (see “Assignments” for exact due dates).
**The Paper Chase and Blackboard Discussion Forum:** Students will watch *The Paper Chase* (outside of class) and then contribute to a lively online discussion of the film by posting at least 2 to 3 comments on Blackboard. More details will be provided at the beginning of the semester.

**Academic Integrity**

The School of Continuing Studies proudly supports Georgetown University’s [Honor System](http://scs.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code). Without regard to motive, student conduct that is academically dishonest, evidences lack of academic integrity or trustworthiness, or unfairly impinges upon the intellectual rights and privileges of others is prohibited. A non-exhaustive list of prohibited conduct includes: cheating on exams and other assignments, committing plagiarism, using false citations, submitting work for multiple purposes, submitting false data, falsifying academic documentation, abuse of library privileges, and abuse of shared electronic media. To learn more about the Honor Code and read helpful student tips, please visit [http://scs.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code](http://scs.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code).

All submitted written work must be the student’s original writing with the exception of quotations or paraphrases, which should always be cited properly. **Plagiarism** is taken very seriously – students are strictly liable for using another person’s ideas, words, or materials without proper citation. Students may not submit their own prior work for academic credit unless I have given my approval to do so. Evidence of academic misconduct (including submitting your own prior work without permission) may result in failing the course and a formal complaint submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs and/or the Honor Council.

**Class Participation**

The basis for the remaining 20% of the grade will be class participation. This course will consist of a mixture of lecture, group work, brief presentations, and ample opportunities for classroom discussions. In order for you to participate effectively, it will be necessary for you to read the assigned materials and come to class prepared for meaningful discussion.

The standard for evaluating class participation will be the willingness to contribute, as a function of the frequency of actual contributions to class discussions. In accordance with the policies of the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies Program, if you miss more than two class sessions for any reason, you may receive a failing grade for the course. If you must miss a class session, please obtain permission ahead of time, or notify me afterward regarding your absence as soon as possible.

**Instructional Continuity**

Instructional activities for this course will be maintained remotely during a University closure. If an unforeseen disruption to in-person class meetings occurs, I will maintain instructional continuity via Group Video Chat on Skype or Google Hangouts (details will be explained by e-mail). These online sessions will occur during the regularly scheduled class meeting time.
## Grading

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## Assignments

### Week One: January 9
Choose and read excerpts of a legal career/practice area book. Perform additional research, if necessary, to prepare for informational interview and class presentation.

### Week Two: January 16
Continue reading legal career/practice area book. Arrange and conduct informational interview. ABA Reaction Paper #1 due today.

### Week Three: January 23

### Week Four: January 30

**Writing Assignment #1 Due**

### Week Five: February 6

### Week Six: February 13

### Week Seven: February 20

### Week Eight: February 27

### Week Nine: March 6
Research and outline memorandum (in-class workshop). ABA Reaction Paper #8 due today.

### Week Ten: March 20
Continue writing legal memorandum. ABA Reaction Paper #9 due today.
**Week Eleven: March 27**


**Writing Assignment #2 Due**

**Week Twelve: April 10**

Understanding a cost/benefit analysis. StrengthsQuest assessment tool. ABA Reaction Paper #11 due today.

**Week Thirteen: April 17**

Research and continue writing final paper. ABA Reaction Paper #12 due today.

**Week Fourteen: April 24**

Wrap-up