

B. Suggestions for Selecting Elective Courses

The faculty was invited to offer suggestions on selecting elective courses. Here are the views of the faculty members who offered their suggestions.

Course Selection Advice from Professor Marina Angel:

If you want to be a lawyer, you must pass the Bar Exam. To pass the Bar Exam, you need to know the subject matter that the Bar Exam tests. A Bar Review course is just that, a “review” course. It is not a “learn it all for the first time in one day” course. The elective bar courses will give you a general familiarity with complex subjects that are hard to master in a relatively short bar review course. They are general “core” areas with which every lawyer should be familiar, and they are building block courses for advanced courses and seminars. Even if you take every elective bar course, you will have 18 credits from which to choose other courses. A memo with additional advice and with a breakdown of Temple’s currently required courses and elective courses in areas that can be tested by the Multi-State Bar Exam and the Pennsylvania Bar Exam is available on Blackboard under My Organizations in the LAW-First Year Day Division and LAW-First Year Evening Division sites. Also keep in mind that the Bar Exam is not an open book, take home exam. You need to select upper class courses that give you closed book, time pressured writing experience.

Course Selection Advice from Professor Jane Baron:

Select courses for the professor, not the subject matter. A good teacher can and will make almost any subject interesting—and Temple has lots of good teachers. Diversify your course package, and resist the urge to take all the “pre-requisite” courses all at once. Five survey courses will seem deadly dull in a short time; vary the mix by taking a writing seminar or specialized course. Ask lots of people for advice before you make your final course choices. There are many philosophies and theories; don’t get hung up on one student or professor’s recommendations. Finally, when in doubt, visit a professor in his or her office and talk to him or her about the course in question. You will learn lots about the topic, and get a sense of whether you will enjoy a class with that particular teacher.

Course Selection Advice from Professor Rob Bartow (speaking as “just” a professor, not an associate dean):

Enrich yourself by selecting faculty with differing perspectives and approaches. Take advantage of the opportunity to develop your lawyering skills while still in a setting where mistakes are expected to occur. Keep three things in mind when selecting courses for their substantive content: Will the course aid you in developing a basic understanding of the main areas of law? Will the course be interesting to you? Will the course require you to reflect on the impact that the legal system has on society? Since individual courses often will not meet all three of these criteria, be sure that the courses you take in any semester, when viewed as a whole, do so. There is no need to take a course just because it covers bar exam material. If you follow the general advice discussed above, and develop good study habits, and take a bar exam

preparation course, you will be well prepared for the bar exam. Now a bit of specific advice. While I do not believe that any particular course is essential to a sound legal education, I do urge you to take Taxation and Corporations. As is true of the traditional first year courses, these two cover concepts with which every lawyer should be familiar. Keep in mind that you may surprise yourself by discovering an unanticipated interest in a particular field of law. Similarly, sometimes students who are sure they will become litigators find themselves pulled toward a transactional practice and vice versa. It is another reason to take a broad range of courses, and to take them earlier rather than later in your law school career.

Course Selection Advice from Professor Rick Greenstein:

My basic feeling about course selection is that ultimately it doesn't matter what you take. I think this for two reasons. First, just about any 88-credit collection of courses will expose you to a variety of subject matters and skills (even if you try to concentrate in a particular field) that will serve you well in your legal career. Second, that career may well move in unanticipated directions; so the idea that you can identify now the very courses you'll most need after graduation is probably an illusion. Every faculty member has particular ideas about what is important for law students to take, but the real question is whether a particular course is important to *you*. If you have a good reason for taking a course (interest, career goals, trustworthy recommendation, etc.) then it is likely an appropriate course to take; if you can't think of a good reason that's personal to you, then the mere fact that someone else thinks taking the course is a good idea might not be sufficient.

Course Selection Advice from Professor Dave Hoffman:

I recommend that you select courses that are challenging and intrinsically interesting. This means tailoring course selection to your abilities (take a tax course, especially if you are afraid of math); and interests (recall what made you excited about the Law before coming here). The data I have seen do not correlate Bar passage with any particular package of courses, but rather with your overall performance and work ethic. Certain employers may expect to see foundational courses like corporations and evidence on your transcript, but I believe those expectations are the exception rather than the rule. The bottom line: take classes that will make you want to come to school each day.

Course Advice from Professor Muriel Morisey:

On Administrative Law: Administrative Law examines the nature and scope of administrative agencies. Virtually every lawyer in virtually every practice setting will encounter administrative law issues. A few contemporary law and policy topics illustrate the point: proposals for financial regulatory reform, regulation of pharmaceuticals and tobacco products by the Food and Drug Administration, and the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate carbon emissions. For public interest lawyers knowledge of administrative law can strengthen advocacy on behalf of clients dealing with government agencies. Administrative Law also gives significant attention to the constitutional principles of separation of powers and due process.

On Legislation: Courts may "say what the law is" but most law is statutory. Understanding the legislative process and statutory interpretation are invaluable skills for lawyers. There are two electives to consider: Legislation, an exam course taught by Professor Libonati, and Legislation and Public Policy, a serial writing seminar taught by Professor Morisey. The seminar focuses on case studies of actual congressional efforts to enact controversial legislation. In the Fall 2010 semester, this will include the process and substance of recently-enacted health care reform legislation.

Course Selection Advice from Professor Eleanor Myers:

I believe that second year students should take a broad range of courses in which they are interested. To be a well educated lawyer, I suggest a basic course in Business Entities (usually Corporations), basic Tax, Introduction to IP and International Law. After that, pick courses with your heart and play to your learning strengths. If you like to perform, take lots of skills courses and clinical courses, if you like to write, take writing courses, including Guided Research. If you like statutes, take more statutory classes, and if you like Constitutional Law, take all the Con Law offerings and Federal Courts. During third year I suggest taking advanced courses in areas that suit your interests and take as many skills and clinical classes as interest you to add variety to your learning.

Course Selection Advice from Professor Jim Shellenberger:

First, students should be well-rounded in their course selections, both in terms of subject matter and lawyering skills. There are certain areas of law to which all students / lawyers should be exposed. Thus, students should take the basic upper level courses in the main areas of law: business (Corporations), commercial (Sales, Secured Transactions), property (Trusts and Estates), litigation (Evidence, Trial Advocacy), constitutional law (Criminal Procedure I, Political and Civil Rights), criminal (Criminal Procedure I, Criminal Law II), tax (the basic federal income tax course). Although I do not think students should take courses only because the subject is on the bar exam, a well-rounded selection of courses in the main areas of law will cover the major bar courses. Students should keep in mind that the main subjects represented in the bar essay questions are those covered on the multi-state portion of the bar (Contracts, Torts, Property including Trusts and Estates, Constitutional Law, Criminal Law and Procedure, Evidence). Second, in addition to subject matter, students should take as many different skills courses as possible, including writing, advocacy, transactional course, etc. Third, in addition to courses in the main subject areas, students should specialize by taking courses that they think they are interested in, either because they think the courses are in areas in which they would like to practice or simply because the courses sound interesting, fun, etc. Finally, students should also realize that much of what the faculty are trying to do in all our courses is the same, regardless of the subject matter. Therefore, if a student finds that they learn particularly well from a particular professor, they should feel free to take that professor's courses regardless of the subjects.

Course Selection Advice from Professor Jan Ting:

Regardless of your eventual specialization, I guarantee that every 21st century lawyer will be asked numerous recurring questions about citizenship and immigration law. Is my child born

abroad a citizen? Will I lose my citizenship if I vote in a foreign election or take an oath of allegiance to another country or use a foreign passport? How do I get my foreign friend/relative/employee into the country? How do I help a non-citizen who is undocumented, or who has documents but was arrested for assault, or who wants to start a business, or who is being denied benefits or a job because of immigration status? The world is becoming a smaller place, and we are all interacting more and more with persons born outside the U.S. Don't be one of those lawyers who keeps saying, "Duh, I didn't take that class in law school." Same thing for tax law.