

X. A Message from the Associate Dean about the Curriculum and Choosing Courses

The Course Selection Guide is designed to help you plan your program of study at the School of Law in your second and third years. The Guide includes schedules and registration instructions. The course and seminar descriptions are provided in a separate document and on the web site. We are likely to add a few offerings as we confirm the schedules of part-time faculty members. While you should consider these publications substantially complete, you should also periodically check the web site and any e-mails you receive from the Registrar's or Dean of Students' Offices for updates. Here I would like to explain a bit about the courses you are required to take and offer some suggestions about how to approach the process of choosing courses. This is an important process that will impact your experience at BU Law and beyond.

In addition to the advice contained in this memo, which is general, the faculty have collaborated on a series of memos that offer detailed course selection guidance in a number of areas of law. We have memos on business law, constitutional law, criminal law, health law, intellectual property, and international law. Those memos can be found, along with a checklist of academic requirements, bar admission requirements, and other useful information here: <http://www.bu.edu/law/current-students/jd-student-resources/academic-advising/>.

Graduation Requirements

There are four graduation requirements you must fulfill during your second and third years.

1) You must satisfy the **Professional Responsibility** requirement. The following courses and seminars satisfy both the BU Law and the New York Bar requirements of a course in professional responsibility. Not all of the seminars will necessarily be offered every year. **If you are entering your third year, be sure to have a clear plan to satisfy this requirement.**

- Professional Responsibility (the 3 credit course)
- Effective and Ethical Depositions (seminar)
- Lawyering in the 21st Century (seminar)
- Prosecutorial Ethics (seminar)
- The HEFD or ER section of Pre-trial Advocacy in the Civil Litigation Clinical Program
- Criminal Trial Practice Clinic – Professional Responsibility
- Legal Externship Program - Legal Ethics Seminar
- Judicial Externship Program – Judicial Process Seminar (Pending approval from the NY Bar)

2) You must satisfy the **upper class writing requirement**, which is described in detail in the Student Handbook and in the Academic Regulations. **By the beginning of your fourth semester of law school**, you should have a clear plan to satisfy this requirement, and ideally the plan should be carried out to completion before starting your last semester of law school. Please note that you must submit to the Registrar's office a form about this—titled “Intention to Complete the Upper Class Writing Requirement”—no later than the last day of the add/drop period of the semester in which you intend to satisfy the requirement and, in any event, no later than the last day of the add/drop period of your fifth semester (fall of the 3L year) so that we know you have a plan to take care of this.

3) You must take one course before graduation that satisfies the American Bar Association's **professional skills requirement**. The menu of eligible courses, not all of which are offered every year, appears at the end of this memo. This is an easy requirement to satisfy, so please don't let yourself get caught short in your final semester.

4) Students graduating with the Class of 2017 and later must complete the online, self-paced **Business Fundamentals** program or opt-out of the requirement by attaining a score of 84% or better on the pre-course exam. You must enroll in the program as a course during the summer, fall, or spring term. Mastery of the material covered in Business Fundamentals will be very useful to you as you tackle upper level courses such as Corporations. Thus, we strongly encourage students to complete this program the summer following the 1L year.

NOTE: In addition, to comply with ABA, New York, and some other state bar requirements, you must complete 64 credits of in-class work while at BU Law. The following **do not** count toward the 64 credit minimum: non-graded credits for journal work; moot court direction; courses taken outside of the law school; externship program fieldwork; independent studies; and semesters in practice.

Recommended Course Selections

Students sometimes ask us to provide a list of recommended courses in addition to those that are required. It is unlikely that the faculty or practicing attorneys would agree about what courses should be on such a list. A program of courses should reflect a balance between your interests in particular courses or professors, the areas where you expect to practice and the skills you will need, and topics that are foundational or the subject of the bar examination. You should therefore consult your faculty adviser (assigned in your first year at BU), other faculty members, attorneys, and your peers to obtain a range of perspectives that can inform your decisions.

The next few pages nevertheless contain some general advice about course selection. Afterwards you will find additional advice from the Office of Career Development. My personal list of courses that almost every law student should take is short:

- Corporations
- Intro. to Federal Income Taxation
- Evidence

These courses all involve issues and terminology that are useful to lawyers in almost every practice area. Not every student needs to take them all, but these courses will contribute to the breadth of your legal education and may lead you to pursue areas of law that are more interesting than you had expected. Complete ignorance of any of them can become a source of professional discomfort to you later on. Even if you have no intention of ever being a tax lawyer, for example, a basic knowledge of that area will at least allow you to participate in conversations about the tax implications of decisions that your clients may face. Being the only one in the room who does not know what "basis" refers to (or what "hearsay" means) is an awkward prospect that you should be eager to avoid.

There are many other courses and seminars that will enrich your experience here. If you do not have a strong view about what practice area you hope to pursue, consider taking some of the foundational courses from this list:

- Bankruptcy
- Criminal Procedure
- Employment Law
- Environmental Law
- Family Law
- Health Law
- Intellectual Property
- International Law
- Secured Transactions
- Trusts, Wills & Basic Estate Planning

This list of courses offers a broad foundation in the largest fields of practice. They are all offered every year, as are most of our large survey courses. Many courses with smaller enrollments are offered every other year, depending on staffing considerations. Keep this in mind in planning your course selections over a two year cycle.

Also, keep in mind that after the first year you may take up to eight total credits of work on an ungraded basis. You either receive credit (CR), or honors (H), or if you do not receive credit for a class (NC), it will be removed from your transcript. Not every course can be taken on these terms, but many can. Our hope is that this rule will encourage you to take coursework that will be valuable to your professional development but that you might have avoided if the result would be a grade on your transcript.

Fields with Formal Concentrations

We offer concentrations in five areas:

1. Health Law
2. Intellectual Property
3. International Law (includes commercial law as well as public international law)
4. Litigation and Dispute Resolution
5. Transactional Practice

Some students complete the requirements of one of these concentrations; others don't. In either case, though, you may find that the lists of courses in the concentrations (available on the law school website) help you to think about your course selection choices.

Note that the International and Litigation concentrations are quite broad. Students interested in these fields may want to seek further advice from the concentration advisor or concentration faculty on how to tailor course choices to a more narrow focus within the list.

Experiential Learning Opportunities

The law school offers a wealth of experiential learning opportunities. In these programs or courses you learn by doing and you gain practical skills that allow you to hit the ground running when you enter practice. You should strongly consider participating in one or more of these programs or courses during your second or third year, but it is important to balance and integrate experiential learning with traditional, substantive coursework. Our experiential learning opportunities are fully described on our website, but include:

- “Live client” clinics: civil, criminal, legislative, and transactional clinical opportunities lasting a semester or year involving a broad array of subject matters.
- The Transactional Law Program: a largely simulation-based approach to transactional skills training.
- Externships: a 12 to 20 hour per week experience working in judicial, government, public interest, in-house or private law firm pro bono service.
- Semester in Practice: a full-time experience working in government or other sectors inside or outside of Boston.
- Courses or seminars, often taught by part-time faculty who are skilled practitioners, that are predominantly experiential. These offerings are identified on a list of courses and seminars meeting the professional skills requirement, which appears at the end of this memo.

NOTE: Anyone seeking admission to practice in New York after January 1, 2015, must demonstrate that they have performed 50 hours of pro bono service. Work done in our civil, criminal, and legislative clinical programs qualifies as does participation in certain externships. Students planning to take the NY Bar should verify if any particular experience would qualify. <http://www.nycourts.gov/attorneys/probono/FAQsBarAdmission.pdf>

Seminars

In a typical year, you can choose from among more than 50 seminars at the law school taught by both full-time and part-time faculty on an extremely broad range of subjects, ranging from critical race theory to private equity and venture capital. Depending on the seminar, participation may provide you with an opportunity to hone your writing skills, to gain practice skills, or to delve into an area of interest in greater than depth than one would in a traditional course. By all means, take a seminar or two while you are at BU Law, but don't overdo it. Some employers will look askance at a transcript with more than a handful of seminars.

Courses in the BU Law Graduate Programs or Elsewhere at BU

You may wish to take courses not listed in the course selection booklet. These include graduate courses in other departments of the University, subject to the limits in the Academic Regulations, but also courses offered by our graduate programs in Taxation and Banking and Financial Law. Most J.D. students are well qualified to take most of these courses, and those programs are eager to have you in their classes. Registration for classes in the graduate programs is not done by the Registrar's Office but by the staff of those programs themselves. See the appropriate sections of this Guide for more details. Students with a clear career path in

banking or tax law may wish to consider enrolling in BU Law's six or seven semester combined JD/LLM programs in these subjects.

Study Abroad Programs

BU Law offers several study abroad programs. In most of these programs, students spend a semester at a foreign school. Some programs have a language requirement, though most offer classes taught in English. Students earn 12 credits, which meets our minimum semester credit requirements. We also offer three year-long, dual-degree study abroad programs, which you can learn more about from the Office of Graduate and International Programs.

Depending on your professional interests, a study abroad program can provide a strong complement to your course of study at the law school. As with all of your course selection decisions, however, you should ensure that the program fits into your area of substantive interest and leaves you room to take other courses that will prepare you for practice.

Balance, Balance, Balance

One of the great strengths of BU Law is the breadth and flexibility of our curriculum, but students must take care in making their selections from this expansive menu. It is fine to specialize in a particular practice area, but balance this with a number of foundational courses in other areas. You never know where your career path will take you. Take interesting seminars and participate in experiential learning opportunities, but not to the exclusion of traditional, substantive courses. Few students should devote more than half of their upper level credits to seminars, experiential learning, and courses from outside of the JD curriculum. We want you to leave BU Law as a well-rounded and capable practitioner with strong skills *and* substantive legal knowledge.

Fred Tung
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs