



COLLEGE OF ARTS
AND SCIENCES

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

**HANDBOOK FOR
PRE-LAW STUDENTS**

Seton Hall University
College of Arts and Sciences
Pre-Law Advising
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About the Office of Pre-Law Advising

The Office of Pre-Law Advising assists students who may be interested in a legal career by providing advice and assistance at all stages of the application process, from exploring whether to pursue a career in law to completing law school applications and deciding which school to attend. The Office sponsors- law-related events such as visits from law school admissions personnel and informing students about law-related events in the local area.

Seton Hall graduates have been accepted by and attended many top law schools. While Seton Hall Law is the most common destination, graduates from the classes of 2015-17 have enrolled at numerous other schools in the New York/New Jersey region and beyond, including: New York Law, Rutgers, NYU, American, William and Mary, Pace, University of Florida, George Washington, Penn State, Arizona State, Hofstra, Northeastern, Notre Dame, University of Richmond, St. John's, Temple, and Villanova.

Note on Curriculum

It is important to know that the nation's top law schools accept students with majors in *all* disciplines. Law school faculty do not expect first-year law students (1Ls) to come in with any prior legal knowledge. Instead, they expect entering students to have strong writing and analytical skills. Many students major in political science prior to applying to law school, but that is by no means the only possible major for pre-law students. Indeed, while the Department of Political Science and Public Affairs does offer numerous classes on law-related topics, there are numerous useful and relevant classes in other departments, and even in other colleges within the University (See page 9). You may want to enroll in some of these classes to see if the field of law interests you before you commit to applying to law school. Overall, it is best to choose your major, your classes and your extracurricular activities based simply on what subjects and activities most interest and challenge you. Pursuing your passions and interests inside and outside the classroom is generally the surest path to becoming the strongest law school applicant you can be.

Message from the Director

Dear Students:

I am pleased to be able to help you with the pre-law process, and look forward to meeting you in a one-on-one advising session. In these meetings we can discuss:

- Whether a legal career is right for you
- Insight on the real-life practice of law and the habits and qualities of successful lawyers
- Opportunities to meet, network with and ask questions of practicing lawyers
- A vision for how your legal career might serve others
- How to choose college classes and activities that might be helpful in deciding whether to apply to law school, and which might strengthen your application
- A strategy for selecting an appropriate portfolio of potential law schools
- Tips on highlighting your unique strengths on law school applications

Drop-in office hours are posted on the door of Jubilee Hall Room 520, or email Pre-LawAdvisor@shu.edu to set up an appointment.

— Prof. Geoffrey Upton, JD, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science and Public Affairs

About the Director

Geoffrey Upton, J.D., Ph.D., is the pre-law advisor for the College of Arts and Sciences, and an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science and Public Affairs. Professor Upton received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley, in December 2017, with a focus on political theory and public law. He also has a J.D. from Harvard Law School. Before pursuing his Ph.D., Professor Upton practiced law in New York City for five years, in both the public and private sectors, and spent one year in Berlin, Germany, on a Robert Bosch Foundation Fellowship. He also has professional experience in journalism and publishing. He is available to meet with students during the office hours posted outside Jubilee Hall Room 520, and via email at Pre-LawAdvisor@shu.edu.

Law School Application Process and Requirements

All applicants must register for the Law School Admission Council's Credential Assembly Service (CAS) as they begin the application process. Through the CAS, the applicant compiles, coordinates, and sends the various components of their applications to the law schools they have selected. A one-time registration fee (which may be waived upon request and submission of financial documents) maintains one's account for 5 years after the day of registration. There are additional fees for each report (your scores, data, and Letters of Recommendation) an applicant wants sent.

When using the CAS, students are advised to keep the following in mind:

1. The name submitted at the time of registration will control all the items contained within one's report. Using a different name on any part of the application may create a problem with submitting one's report to law schools.
2. All of the entries made with CAS are available to law schools. For example, if you label a letter of recommendation "for a safety school," that school may see you have designated it as such.
3. Read all instructions, warnings, and other communications very carefully. For example, if you have studied abroad through Seton Hall University, do not list the institution abroad as an institution attended, since that would lead CAS to hold your report until that institution has sent a transcript.
4. Monitor your file with CAS on a regular basis to make sure your file is complete and sent to your law schools expeditiously. Law schools like to fill their classes with certainties; a delay can cost you an easy admission.
5. Individual schools may have their own particular requirements, i.e., two recommendation letters instead of three, a different policy on late admits, etc. Familiarize yourself with these variations and prepare accordingly.

Letters of Recommendation

All ABA-approved schools require applicants to use CAS's recommendation service. Students are advised to request recommendation letters from faculty members who know them well. Letters from advisors are discouraged. Be sure that a potential recommender can provide a favorable, detailed, personal letter. Students are advised to make an appointment with referees to ask them to write a letter of recommendation, rather than asking for a letter of recommendation via email. Note: Specific, individualized letters are highly, highly preferable to

vague, generic letters, even if the latter are written by more well-known or influential professors or lawyers.

Personal Statement

The purpose of the personal statement is to gather information about the applicant outside of the academic performance report, LSAT score and list extracurricular activities. A personal statement should not read like a resume, but rather should be a self-reflective piece that ideally reveals something about the applicant's personality, clarifies the applicant's reasons for seeking law school admission, and makes the applicant stand out from the pack of other pre-law students.

A strong personal statement generally has a clear, memorable theme or message. This may relate to the influences of family or early life experiences; the influences of extracurricular, work or volunteer experiences; one's mastery of obstacles or disadvantages before, during, or after one's college years, including personal growth as a result of a tragedy or success; a revelatory experience gained from a course, professor, or event in college or after; or an explanation of one's unique traits, hobbies, skills, and interests.

The LSAT

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a logic-based, 3.5-hour standardized test administered multiple times per year by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC). The maximum possible score is 180. Most law schools consider one's LSAT score and one's college GPA to be the two most significant components of the application. Prospective law students are advised to only take the LSAT when they feel fully prepared for the exam. Many students choose to take the June LSAT, because if one is dissatisfied with their score, there is still time to re-take the exam in October to have their application completed in early November.

Students are advised to create their own study plan to prepare for their exam, which may include a combination of preparing alone, forming a study group or attending a prep course. All prospective LSAT test-takers should check out the free self-paced online test prep offered by Khan Academy in partnership with LSAC: www.khanacademy.com.

While other prep courses can be expensive, many companies offer scholarships for applicants in financial need. Students are urged to reach out to each company for additional help. The leading test prep companies include:

Binary Solution – www.binarysolution.com

Kaplan – www.kaplan.com

Powerscore – www.powerscore.com

Princeton Review – www.princetonreview.com

TestMasters – www.testmasters.com

Note: As of mid-2018, 23 law schools—including many top 10 schools—accept GRE (Graduate Record Examination) scores from applicants as an alternative to the LSAT. Students should consult with the pre-law advisor and research both tests before determining whether the GRE is a good option for them.

Choosing a Law School

Deciding where to apply to law school is a very important and highly personal decision—as is where to attend once you have been admitted. Many factors should be considered, including cost, location, school reputation and school profile. You can find much of the information you need on the Law School Admissions Council website. Prospective law students are advised to weigh a variety of personal and academic factors to come up with 8-12 potential schools that they wish to apply to. Students should consult the LSAC's online tool to help them determine schools where they will be competitive based solely on the LSAT score and their GPA.

Timeline for Applying to Law School

Here is a suggested timeline for the law school application process. Each student's timeline will differ, however, and an individualized plan should be discussed with the pre-law advisor.

I. Freshman/Sophomore Years

- a. Begin searching for viable law schools
- b. Schedule a meeting with the pre-law advisor
- c. Attend law school admissions and financial aid meetings
- d. Consider enrolling in classes that may help you decide whether to attend law school (see next page)

II. Junior Year

- a. Pursue legal internships and opportunities
- b. Continue to meet with pre-law advisor
- c. Enroll in LSAT prep course and/or form LSAT study group
- d. Discuss law school application process with pre-law advisor
- e. Begin to seek out recommendation letters from professors/supervisors
- f. Register with and send recommendation letters to the Credential Assembly Service (CAS)

III. Summer Before Senior Year

- a. Continue law school research
- b. Register for LSAT, if you have not done so already
- c. Begin to draft personal statement

IV. Senior Fall (or fall of application year if applying as a graduate)

- a. Compile list of law schools to apply to
- b. Ensure recommendation letters have been submitted
- c. Finalize personal statement
- d. Review financial aid options and file FAFSA (applications open Oct. 1)
- e. Submit law school applications, ideally by Nov. 1
- f. Submit updated transcript with fall semester grades at end of semester
- g. Monitor application status to ensure applications are complete

V. Senior Spring (or spring of application year if applying as a graduate)

- a. Monitor application status to ensure applications are complete
- b. Complete additional financial aid forms and scholarship applications
- c. Discuss law school decision with pre-law advisor
- d. Decide which school to attend; notify all schools and pre-law advisor

List of Law-Related Courses within the College of Arts and Sciences

The classes listed below may be of interest to students considering law school. They either contain law-related content or are likely to help students improve their writing and critical thinking skills. Note: Not all classes may be offered in a given semester, and there are likely many other courses not on this list that are worth considering.

AFAM 1518 (SOWK 1314) Social Work and the Law. Examines the interaction of the disciplines of law and social work, as well as interactions between lawyers and social workers and the relationship of ethics and law. 3 credits

ANTH 2213 (SOCI 2213) Case Studies in the Anthropology of Law. Investigation of ways law operates in various cultures throughout the world. Concepts of justice as related to religion, politics, economics and ethics; case studies from many different societies. “Western law” contrasted with customary law and other forms of legal experience in several Third World countries. Discussions of benefits that may be derived from understanding mechanisms of dispute resolution among non-Western people. 3 credits

HIST 2381 American Legal History I. Introduction to the development of law in America from the origin of English common law and its reception in the English colonies to the 20th century United States, with emphasis on the political, social, and economic factors influencing this development. 3 credits

HIST 2382 American Legal History II. Introduction to the development of law in the United States in the 20th century. 3 credits

PHIL 1104 Logic. Nature of thinking, truth and validity. Uses of language. Concepts and propositions. Deductive and inductive reasoning. Fallacies. 3 credits

PHIL 2150 Philosophy of Law. Critical assessment of the concept of law. What is the nature of law? Examination of the differences among natural law, legal positivism, legal realism, and critical legal studies. Topics covered include legal reasoning, law and morality, law and liberty and constitution law. 3 credits

PHIL 2140 Political Philosophy. Critical assessment of the nature of Western political thought. What is political philosophy? What are the differences, if any, among political philosophy, political theory and the history of political thought? How should we read a political text? An in-depth exploration of one or several of the following concepts: authority, liberty, justice, legitimacy, political obligation, anarchy and the concept of the political itself. 3 credits

POLS 2214 United States Judicial System. Concepts of law and jurisprudence, functions and staffing of United States courts, state and federal. Strengths and weaknesses of the jury system. The Supreme Court, how it decides, impact of its decisions and the role of the court in United States constitutional law. Controversy over judicial review. 3 credits

POLS 2229 (SOCI 2213, ANTH 2213) Introduction to U.S. Law. Explores the basis for United States law by examining various theories of jurisprudence, or philosophies of law, and the goals and objectives of law. Distinguishes law from other forms of social control, and looks at the impact of law on society. 3 credits

POLS 2713 International Law. Evolution and basic concepts of international law. More specifically, cases involving conflict resolution, human rights and legal challenges to space, the sea and sovereignty are explored. 3 credits

POLS 3210 Constitutional Law. Approaches to Constitutional interpretation: Supreme Court decision making, Supreme Court as a small group. Fundamentals and principles of constitutional law. Illustrative case studies. 3 credits

POLS 3211 Civil Liberties. Casebook analysis of the constitutional rights of the individual. Selected topics from the first, fourth, fifth, sixth, eighth and 14th amendments. Emphasis on contemporary issues and perspectives. 3 credits

POLS 3212 United States Federalism. Examination of the nature of the Federal system, with historical origins, constitutional evolution and contemporary problem areas highlighted. 3 credits

POLS 3410 Democracy. Considers various theories and practices of democratic society, including those of liberal, radical participatory and pluralistic democracy. Comparison of democratic theory and practice. 3 credits

POLS 3412 Church, State, Law and Politics in the United States. The dynamic and changing relationship between religion and government in the U.S. Competing and cooperative actions between the institutions. Case studies in First Amendment rights. 3 credits

SOCI 2303 Crime, Law and Society. This course broadly examines the relationship, as well as social construction, of crime and criminal law. Legal constructions of crime do not take place in a vacuum; rather, they are also the domain of legislatures, interest groups (and lobbies), task forces, implementation authorities, law enforcement, prosecutors, defense attorneys and social groups. Crime may be also be construed as local, national or global, and comparative in nature. Prerequisite: SOCI 1101 or ANTH 1202 or permission of the department chair. 3 credits

Selected Relevant Courses in Other Colleges at Seton Hall

Many law-related courses are offered by the Stillman School of Business and the School of Diplomacy and are open to Arts and Sciences students. The courses below may be of particular interest to pre-law students.

BLAW 2301 Legal Foundations of Business. Examination of the relationship between the business environment and the legal environment. Topics include constitutional law implications, contractual relationships, employment and ethics. Offered: Fall, Spring. 3 credits

BLAW 3462 Government and Business. Examines the regulatory interactions of government with enterprise. Survey of the institutional and legal structure in which business functions in the United States. The theoretical and empirical implications of regulation evaluated through the case method. Prerequisites: BLAW 2301, ECON 1402 and ECON 1403. 3 credits

BLAW 4315 International Business Law. Highlights those aspects of public and commercial law that are relevant to American business operating in the international environment. Includes legal and ethical aspects of international trade and commercial transactions. Prerequisite: BLAW 2301. Offered: T.B.D. 3 credits

BLAW 4316 Consumer Law. In-depth examination of legal and ethical issues relating to consumer rights, responsibilities, and advertising. Prerequisite: BLAW 2301. Offered: T.B.D. 3 credits

BLAW 4325 Law, Ethics and Public Policy. Examines the ethical and public policy issues raised in a variety of areas of law. Provides an in-depth treatment of many of the legal and ethical issues faced in the business environment. Prerequisite: BLAW 2301. Offered: T.B.D. 3 credits

BLAW 4326 Issues in Employment Law. Examination of employment law issues and ethical dilemmas facing today's managers. Emphasis on sexual discrimination, racial discrimination, sexual harassment, whistle blowing, hiring, firing, layoffs and disability. Discussion of the relationship between corporate social responsibility and employment. Prerequisite: BLAW 2301. Offered: T.B.D. 3 credits

BLAW 4327 Legal Aspects of Conflict Resolution. Examines the myriad of issues which may result in adversarial litigation and how best to avoid those conflicts. These include proven methods of resolving disputes, such as negotiation, mediation, arbitration and other forms of alternative dispute resolution. The course will also consider cross-cultural issues, which may manifest themselves as potential disputes that can best be avoided if we understand the different values and attitudes of the various parties to a dispute. Such issues include cultural difference and detecting the viewpoint of the business and the individual and how best to

achieve a mutual satisfactory goal without conflict. Prerequisite: BLAW 2301. Offered: T.B.D. 3 credits

BLAW 4340 Legal Research, Writing and Moot Court. Introduction to the research techniques currently used in the legal community. Shows how to develop an analytical approach toward legal issues through both written and oral exercises. Prerequisite: BLAW 2301. Offered: T.B.D. 3 credits

DIPL 3104 Public International Law. Deals with the nature, history and domains of international law. Through case studies, this course provides understanding of the international legal system with regard to such basic goals as curbing resort to war, peaceful settlement of disputes, fostering peaceful use of the oceans, Antarctica and outer space, enhancing respect for human rights, preserving the environment and strengthening the capability of the United Nations and the U.N. system as a primary instrument of world order. 3 credits

DIPL 4106 Human Rights Law and Policy. Combines skill development in research, writing and oral communication with development of an understanding of the sources and nature of those rights of individuals and groups that are, or have been, identified as "Human Rights" under various international conventions, state constitutions and bills of rights, United Nations resolutions and other sources. Specific human rights violations in areas of health, nutrition, labor, the environment, educational systems, political torture and genocide are explored. 3 credits

DIPL 4198 International Criminal Law. Explores the historical, political and diplomatic evolution of international criminal law in this century, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and the International Criminal Court. 3 credits