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***PRE LAW ADVISEMENT  
for Freshmen, Sophomores and Juniors***

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## INTRODUCTION

I am available to help you plan your pre law education and reach reasonable decisions on how, when and where to apply to law school. Although I can guide you, the ultimate responsibility for your professional school planning rests with you. I can explain what a law school education is about, suggest related readings, and provide statistical data and information (at the beginning of your senior year) about the probability of your admission to selected law schools. However, I cannot tell you whether you will enjoy the law, or whether you will be a good lawyer, or whether you will find a job that fulfills your increased expectations upon law school graduation. The answers to these questions depend to a large extent on you.

Your years at Stern are a time to learn and develop management and other business skills; as well as to explore the liberal arts. Through your studies, you can further develop your study skills and learning ability, and demonstrate expertise in a particular academic discipline. As Stern graduates, you should be able to take advantage of the business skills that you acquired and work in your field of expertise – perhaps for several years before applying to law school. (See page 3.)

This document is intended to be read together with The Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools published by the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) and the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) as well as many other materials (as set forth below) and posted online. The Prelaw Handbook (as it is known in the trade) is revised annually and is the official guide to all American Bar Association approved law schools in the country. In addition to individual law school profiles and entrance requirements, the book offers excellent discussions on law as a career, preparation for law school, the admissions process, the law school experience, financing a law school education, and a list of suggested pre law readings. Students who are thinking about possibly attending law school are strongly urged to read the introductory pages of the Prelaw Handbook. It can be accessed at [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org).

~~In the fall of each year, the LSAC sponsors a Law School Forum in New York City, as well as in other selected cities throughout the country. Call (215) 968-1001 or click on <http://www.lsac.org/jd/choosing-a-law-school/law-school-recruitment-forums> for more information. Representatives from over 160 of the nation's law schools answer your questions and bring catalogues, bulletins and applications, and the LSAC provides shopping bags so that you can collect and carry home virtually everything you ever wanted to know about legal education, specific law schools and their admissions criteria. This is an opportunity to speak directly to representatives from the admissions offices—an opportunity that you should not miss.~~

Sadly, the Law School Forums will not be taking place this year due to COVID restrictions. Instead, a Digital Forum will take place on the following dates: September 26, October 13, November 4, and December 12. More information [here](#).

NYU Law Admissions will be changing and scaling back its opportunities for in-person visits (such as meetings with students and class visitations) for at least the Fall 2020 semester. For the most up-to-date information, visit this [website](#).

The American Bar Association's official guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools includes statistical information on ABA-approved law schools (such as enrollment, LSAT scores, curricula, faculty, career placement, etc.). You can access this information by going to the following LSAC website: <http://officialguide.lsac.org/>.

Prepared graphs showing the pattern of acceptances and rejections made by law schools to which Stern students and alumni have applied can be found in looseleaf binders in the Undergraduate Advising office on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of Tisch Hall. These will be available on an extremely limited basis during the Fall 2020 term. Please send an email message to Kevin ([ucadvising@stern.nyu.edu](mailto:ucadvising@stern.nyu.edu)) at least two weeks before you would like to review the material in these binders to inquire about availability. On my website you can obtain class profile grids that have been prepared by the Boston College Career Office (Law School Locator): <http://www.bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/law/research/lawlocator.html#locator>

I recommend that you look at the materials posted on the website of the Northeast Association of Prelaw Advisors (NAPLA): <http://www.naplaconference.org/resources-for-law-school-applicants/>. For those of you who are international students, I believe you should carefully read the documents that advise international students about applying to law school and then practicing as a lawyer upon graduation from law school within the United States.

There are many other Internet sites that focus on law schools, legal careers and law-related topics. An excellent site for general information is <http://www.ilrg.com>. The Law School Admissions Council's home page, which provides an abundance of information about the law school application process and the LSAT, is at <http://www.lsac.org>. Other sites that may be of interest to you: Association of American Law School: <http://www.aals.org>; American Association of Law Libraries: <http://www.aallnet.org>; ABA- Approved Law Schools: [http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/aba\\_approved\\_law\\_schools.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/aba_approved_law_schools.html); National Association of Law Placement: <http://www.nalp.org>; American Bar Association Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar: <http://apps.americanbar.org/legaled/accreditation/acinfo.html>.

For rankings in 10 categories, from admissions to employment, of the law schools in the New York City area link to: <http://www.nylj.com>.

Finally, one of the best resources for pre law matters is the Stern Business and Law Association (SBLA). This student association hosts events, lectures, and programs for interested students. During the fall, the SBLA typically arranges for campus visits by admissions officers of various law schools. However, during the fall 2020 semester, all SBLA meetings and events will be held remotely. You may join the Stern Business Law Association during Fall orientation – which will be held remotely. For information, please visit

SBLA's website at: [www.stern.nyu.edu/~sbla](http://www.stern.nyu.edu/~sbla) or email the organization at [sbla@nyu.edu](mailto:sbla@nyu.edu). You should seriously consider getting involved with this worthwhile student organization. I am the faculty adviser to this student organization. Inquire via email for their fall and spring programs (and how they will be affected by being remote in Fall 2020).

You should also be aware of the Pre Law Society at the College of Arts and Science. It is a very active and worthwhile organization. The society's NYU website: <http://www.nyu.edu/clubs/prelaw.society/>. The CAS prelaw advisory office is part of the Pre-professional Advisement Office which is located in 905 Silver (212) 998-8160 or email at [prelaw@nyu.edu](mailto:prelaw@nyu.edu).

You also can learn about CAS pre-law events by subscribing to: [join-prelawsociety@forums.nyu.edu](mailto:join-prelawsociety@forums.nyu.edu). To subscribe, send the following message from your NYU email address: Join prelaw first name last name.

On Monday, October 5<sup>th</sup> at 12:30pm I will hold a digital law school advisement session to introduce myself, provide applicants with the information that is contained in these Guidelines and answer questions about the application process. This session will be recorded and subsequently posted online for those students who will be unable to attend.

If you have general pre-law questions throughout your undergraduate career, I encourage you to also consider making an appointment by logging onto Albert:

[http://w4.stern.nyu.edu/uc/advisingdocs/quick\\_start\\_guide\\_to\\_aas.pdf](http://w4.stern.nyu.edu/uc/advisingdocs/quick_start_guide_to_aas.pdf)

to speak with one of the Stern Undergraduate academic advisers who can help you with identifying appropriate courses, selecting law schools, understanding the law school application timeline, and other related matters. I reserve my time during the fall semester to meet with Stern seniors and alumni who are in the process of applying to law school. Stern students who are not yet ready to apply to law school may make appointments with me during the spring semester. Academic advisers are available during the Fall and Spring semesters to meet with you.

Kevin Valliere is the undergraduate adviser who assists me with pre law advising. He has worked at Stern for five years, focusing on students taking a leave of absence, special research initiatives, as well as advising students enrolled in the Business and Political Economy program. His contact information is set forth on the cover page of this document.

## THE PRE LAW CURRICULUM

Many students ask for suggestions in planning a prelaw educational program. At Stern, there is no formal pre law minor or curriculum and a prelaw student, quite simply, is one who defines himself or herself as such.

Although you may intend to go on to law school immediately upon graduation, most Stern students do not apply to law school until at least two years after they have earned their undergraduate degree.

Indeed, at the most competitive law schools—such as our own—more than fifty percent of the first year class have been out of school for at least one year. Given the choice, law school admission committees often prefer more mature and experienced applicants. If you have any doubt about going to law school, you should wait and work, travel, volunteer, etc. There is no “track” from which you will be derailed. Quite the opposite – your years of experience will help to make you a better attorney!

As graduates of an excellent business school, you will have opportunities to apply what you studied here in jobs such as accounting, financial services, investment banking, IT, management, marketing, etc. Don’t blindly rush off to law school without first giving these opportunities a chance.

As Stern juniors, you will be required to take Law, Business and Society, and as Stern seniors, you will be required to take the Professional Responsibility and Leadership course. Stern recognizes that all business people need a basic footing in law and ethics. In fact, all of the courses in Stern’s Social Impact Curriculum will prepare you for a legal education (although that is certainly not the purpose of such courses).

Stern endorses the viewpoint of the AALS that a single, “best” pre law curriculum cannot be identified. You should concentrate in those academic areas that most hold your interest – the fields most likely to motivate you to perform well. Law schools do not prefer any specific major. Most schools recommend that students perfect their skills in English composition. Words are the tools of a lawyer and the student who can express himself or herself with confidence and clarity will be at a distinct advantage. Beginning with the Freshman Expository Writing Program, you should be concentrating on developing writing skills to the utmost. Also, the importance of verbal skills cannot be overstated, and the development of the ability to express oneself forcefully and accurately, both orally and in writing, is at the heart of the legal profession.

Given the above, it is possible to sketch those areas that are most suitable for eventual legal studies. First, since verbal expression is at the heart of the profession, courses that require extensive reading, writing, and research should be taken. These are in liberal arts and business areas. Second, the precision of methodology and thought required in mathematics, computers, logic, globalization and the natural sciences will aid in the development of analytic skills. Third, a background in the behavioral sciences and humanities—politics, history, literature, philosophy, anthropology, sociology—is suggested since each will offer critical understanding of human intuitions and values with which the law deals. Understanding basic economic and business principles is of increasing importance in law school classroom analysis. Even non-business majors are being urged to take business courses. Obviously, if you are thinking of practicing international law or in a bilingual or ethnic community, you should study the language and culture of the regions that hold appeal. International business courses will be helpful as well.

The courses listed below appear with some regularity in the College of Arts & Science curriculum. Please note that the courses change from year to year and semester by semester, so consult the Fall and Spring bulletins to familiarize yourself with current offerings.

- **History:** Many courses. See here:  
<http://as.nyu.edu/history/courses.html>
- **Journalism:** JOURNALISM ETHICS AND FIRST AMENDMENT LAW
- **Metropolitan Studies:** Law and Urban Problems, Urban Design and the Law
- **Philosophy:** Political Philosophy, Ethics, Value and Society
- **Politics:** American Constitution, American Law and Legal System, Civil Liberties, Law and Society
- **Psychology:** Social Psychology of Decision
- **Sociology:** Deviance and Social Control, Criminology, Law and Society, Politics, Power and Society
- **Gender & Sexuality Studies:** Law and Society, Women and Islamic Law, Gender in Law

Keep in mind that most law schools actively discourage students from taking too many law-related classes as undergraduates. Law is based upon sets of fundamental principles that are reflected in basic fields such as contracts, torts, criminal law, property, constitutional law, and procedure. These courses are most often taught in the first year of law school. Most law students do not fully comprehend what legal education is about until they are well into their study of these subjects. Elective second and third year courses are based upon basic principles learned in the first year. The Stern undergraduate student taking a variety of law-related courses cannot hope to achieve an ordered understanding of legal fundamentals. Students who overload on such courses may, upon entering law school, mistakenly believe they have achieved a head start. In short, while law-related courses may help you decide whether law is a field that interests you and may familiarize you with a new vocabulary, it is debatable whether undergraduate law courses will help you in the admissions process or measurably help you once you are a law student.

## GRADES

It would be hypocritical to address curricular choices without addressing the issue of grades. Like it or not, grades—together with your score on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT)—play a critical part in the admissions process. How should this affect your choice of courses to take as an undergraduate? Ideally, not at all, but realistically it is better to take 16 credits and get A's and B's than to get C's with 20 credits. Law schools will receive a copy of your transcript, and admissions officers know from experience which disciplines are rigorous, which departments have strong academic reputations, and which courses have high and low curves. They also recognize when a student is systematically padding the transcript to achieve a higher grade point average. The Stern School is highly respected and all departments are recognized as being demanding.

If you are avoiding a course because it is difficult, or you are uncertain whether a particular subject will interest you, you should take the risk. In the first place, one poor grade has never kept anyone out of even the most competitive law school, and secondly, you should be willing to explore. You may find that once you are exposed to unfamiliar territory, it will become an exciting academic

interest that you decide to pursue. Law school admissions offices encourage this approach to learning. This is the purpose of an undergraduate education.

Finally, I advise you to major in a field that holds your interest. This has particular relevance with respect to grades. If you are enjoying what you are learning, the result will be better grades. Also, you will be prepared to embark upon a career after your Stern graduation that hopefully will interest you (perhaps even leading you to decide not to pursue a legal career!)

## WITHDRAWALS AND THE PASS/FAIL OPTION

Most law school admissions committees have, what is best described as, mixed emotions about the pass/fail option. Although committees sympathize with the idea that pass/fail grading may give a student the opportunity to take a course that he or she otherwise would not take, committees also believe that the more of such marks on a transcript, the less information they have on which to base their judgment on your qualifications as an applicant. One of the consequences of a permanent record laden with pass/fail credits is that increasingly greater weight may be placed on your LSAT score.

Similarly, you should avoid withdrawing from courses whenever possible. This does not mean that you should never withdraw from a course, but a series of withdrawals over several semesters carries strong negative implications—from an attempt to manipulate the grade point average, to an inability to finish what you have started. Since most law schools have prescribed first year curricula, admissions committees look negatively upon undergraduate students who fail to complete a term's expected (or required) course load. You also should keep in mind that if you decide to apply to law school in your senior year, the admissions office's decision is likely to be based upon your first three years (six semesters) of academic work.

## IS THE LAW FOR ME? THE LAW SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Although law school, like college, can lead to a variety of occupations and one student's experience can be quite different from another's, virtually all accredited law schools share the common and specialized objective of training people to become lawyers (not investment bankers, hedge fund managers, motion picture executives, sports agents, etc.). This professional orientation is reflected in the similarity of different law schools' curricula, as well as in a common attitude among students, all of whom, at least during the first year, are taking the same courses. Each student is eager to master the fundamental skills and studies hard to achieve that end. While law school is not necessarily more difficult intellectually than college, the workload tends to be substantially greater and the level of competency demanded by professors is uniformly higher. Since everyone is studying the same materials, each with a desire to master skills certain to be required in a legal career, students in law schools usually are faced with a heightened sense of competition. Although Stern students are accustomed to competition and hard work, even they report back to me that law school is more demanding.

The first year of law school is devoted to a process of “re-education” because law schools see themselves as teaching people to “think like lawyers.” Students are forced to think critically and precisely and to articulate their ideas with clarity and conviction. Although its dominance has declined in recent years, the Socratic teaching method remains the principal classroom tool in this educational process. The Socratic method entails rapidly paced questions by the professor and answers by the student(s)—a give-and-take session in the classroom setting—which are designed to teach students how to analyze and synthesize into a coherent framework the raw materials of the common law. A law professor will rarely explain precisely what the rule of law is in a particular case or area, often because it is impossible to do so. Instead, the students are expected to develop and organize their own understanding of the shape and trend in precedent as they digest hundreds of appellate judicial decisions. Daily classes, as well as examinations (which are in essay form requiring legal analysis of a factual hypothetical situation and usually offered once in each course at the end of the semester or full academic year), require extensive reading and preparation. Accomplishment, however, depends far more upon skill at rapid analysis and articulation than upon memory and regurgitation. Group projects, at least during the first year of law school, are uncommon—although studying with other students is very common.

In addition to the traditional “casebook” courses that traditionally have typified legal education, most law school students participate in legal writing or “lawyering” courses, which may include “moot court” programs. These provide an introduction to the essential skills of research, preparation of memoranda, briefs, and other legal documents, as well as to negotiation, conflict resolution, and oral advocacy. In the second and third years, students select from a variety of traditional casebook courses that further enhance basic skills while providing substantive familiarity with more specialized areas of law, e.g. evidence, taxation, corporations, securities, family law, environmental law, labor law, international law, etc. Most law schools also offer seminars in a variety of disciplines such as legal philosophy, as well as clinical programs that enable students to pursue specialized interests and perform legal tasks under clinical professors’ supervision. Indeed, clinical and “cooperative” programs have become increasingly important tools in legal education and many students choose a law school based upon the variety and reputation of an institution’s clinical offerings.

Experience outside the classroom is as vital to legal education—especially to second and third year students—as formal coursework. Law students learn as much from their peers (usually in close-knit study groups) as from their professors; many extracurricular activities in law school revolve around student-run projects in legal education and advocacy. On the academic side, most law schools have advanced programs in moot court for students who believe they will engage in trial and/or appellate advocacy as a lawyer. Student publications, such as different levels and types of law reviews, offer legal scholarship in periodical form. Students are invited to serve as editors of these law reviews based on the grades they receive during their first year of law school and/or the results they obtain on targeted writing competitions. On a more practical level, many students participate in organizations that provide legal assistance or research to the elderly, indigents, prison inmates, and other groups at the center of social and political controversy. Note that law schools are dramatically modifying their curriculum. See final page of this document for further details.



Obtaining “hands on” experience through an internship in the legal field is an excellent way to determine if a legal career may be appropriate for you. Undergraduates have served as interns in the courts, government agencies, legal public interest agencies, and law firms. The Wasserman Center for Career Development (133 E. 13th Street, 2nd Floor, between 3rd & 4th Avenue) lists internships (paid, non-paid, and for-credit) for all NYU students on [Handshake](#).

To learn first-hand about a variety of legal areas, you should register for the mentoring program (<http://www.nyu.edu/careerdevelopment/programs/mentors.php>). This program, administered by Career Development, allows students to benefit from professional experiences of NYU alumni who are practicing attorneys. The program offers role models, job-shadowing, contacts, and networking opportunities. Call Career Development at (212) 998-4730 to obtain more information. **This program will not be running in Fall 2020 but will likely be running in future semesters.**

Another way for you to gauge your level of interest in pursuing a legal career may be to test your tolerance for ambiguity. To the layman, law appears to be an extremely precise field: something is clearly right or wrong, legal or illegal. Yet any law student or lawyer can tell you that law is full of “ifs,” “buts,” and “maybes.” It is not a world of “black” and “white,” but of murky shadows and shades of gray; and interpretation, analysis, and even competence in the courtroom may depend on a lawyer’s ability to stay afloat in an ocean of ambiguity. If you are the kind of person who likes precision and exactness, then you might think more seriously about a career in law. The Law, Business and Society course that all Stern students must take will give you a better sense of this than most of your other (more quantitative) courses at Stern.

For students motivated by idealistic or humanitarian interests, the long hours and hard work devoted to learning and legal fundamentals may seem irrelevant to long-term goals. A law student must learn every aspect of the law, regardless of specific career plans. Even if you are most interested in pursuing a career in, for example, human rights or civil liberties law, you must learn a great deal about such topics as contracts, torts, civil procedure, corporate law, and taxation. Every state’s bar examination, which must be passed by anyone seeking to gain the opportunity to practice law in that state, covers all substantive areas of the law. Similarly, while many pre law students embrace the idea of a legal career because of a personal antipathy towards numbers, e.g. mathematics, economics, and the sciences, you should remember that lawyers are most often called upon to deal with conflict, and that since most conflict is financial (even in many criminal cases, divorce cases, etc.), the horror of numbers cannot be avoided. You should be familiar with accounting principles and know how to read a balance sheet, even if you are working for the National Resources Defense Council and attempting to save a pristine Alaskan forest. Of course, Stern students are strong in the quantitative area. Law school is a long, arduous, and sometimes monotonously indirect route that eventually will enable the graduate to acquire tools that will be needed to effectively represent any individual or group, from the largest corporation to a dispossessed tenement tenant in need of legal aid.

LAW AS A CAREER

One hurdle remains after graduation from law school before students can practice law as licensed attorneys. Bar examinations are administered by individual states to license those who wish to practice in their jurisdiction. Most law students enroll in a six- or eight-week “bar review” course given in the state in which they intend to practice soon after graduating from law school. As stated above, these examinations are taken over several days and test a broad spectrum of legal topics.

This is a changing and difficult period in the legal profession. A law degree, even from a more prestigious law school, does not provide a guarantee of legal employment. Since the severe economic crisis that began in late 2008, the legal sector has dramatically suffered and its future remains more and more problematic. Also, many lawyers complain that the hours they put into their work rob them of a satisfactory private life. While it is impossible as an undergraduate to be absolutely certain of how you intend to earn a living, given the high cost of law school and future downside employment trends, one should be fairly committed to the calling of law before embarking on a legal education. My website <http://people.stern.nyu.edu/jcaldero/> has links to recent articles. Some of the most recent articles are listed on the final page of this document.

The tendency of most graduating law students to enter private or government legal practice should be recognized by those who are considering law school as an avenue to a non-legal career. While it is true that a law degree can lead to a variety of occupations, most law students become lawyers in the private sector, and even those who pursue “non-traditional careers” often begin their quest with several years of active legal practice. The mere fact that you have a law degree will not lead you to a top management position on Wall Street or in Hollywood, and given the time and expense of a legal education, you might be better served with an M.B.A. or other specialized graduate degree or professional license or the experience of working at an entry-level position in your non-legal field of interest upon graduation from Stern. The National Association of Law Placement offers worthwhile information on this subject. Visit its website at [www.nalp.org](http://www.nalp.org).

Many students whose experience has been limited to academic situations find it difficult to determine whether law will be a suitable career for them. There are several ways to explore the option of law school, academically and through practical experience. As an undergraduate, you may decide to enroll in one or two law-oriented courses (in the College of Arts and Science, Steinhardt, etc.) to test your interest in the study of law. A few of these courses may use as textbooks the same casebooks used by law schools, but most will be taught in traditional undergraduate survey format. You should consult the Bulletins of these NYU schools to determine what will be offered during this current academic year, as discussed previously.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINORITY STUDENTS

The underrepresentation of minority groups in the legal profession has been a longstanding and serious problem in this country. For this reason, for at least the past thirty five years, law schools have been actively recruiting minority applicants and have established policies to assure that qualified candidates are given the opportunity for a legal education. This remains true today despite

the Trump administration's lack of support for affirmative action policies. In addition, several recent United States Supreme Court decisions do not fully support affirmative action policies and with the changing make up of the country's highest court, affirmative action policies may become obsolete in the not too distant future.

If you are a minority student, it is wise to be well informed of the opportunities available to you. You should make certain to identify yourself as a member of a minority group at the time you register for the LSAT and with the LSAC. This will enable interested law schools to contact you through the Candidate Referral Service. Thereafter, you might wish to contact minority student organizations at the law schools you are considering. It will be to your advantage to discuss your interests and applications with members of these organizations because in some instances they will track your application and may have a part in the admission decision. These students can also inform you of any special problems or special advantages for minority students at their particular law school.

Each year, the Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO) helps economically and educationally disadvantaged students enter law school. This is achieved through a summer institute program designed to introduce minority college graduates to the study of law. Information on CLEO is available from law school admissions offices or from CLEO's national office at 1101 Mercantile Lane, Suite 294, Largo, MD, 20774 or call 240-582-8600. CLEO's website is <http://www.cleoscholars.com>.

Furthermore, "Seizing Every Opportunity" will be hosting a number of virtual sessions throughout August and September 2020. See [this image](#) for more information.

A FINAL NOTE...

Once again, I urge you to read the Prelaw Handbook (*The Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools*), it's suggested reading list, as well as some of the other materials previously discussed. *The Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools* can be directly viewed online at <http://officialguide.lsac.org/>. Too many students wait until they are actually applying to law school before consulting these materials. I also encourage you to join the Stern Business and Law Association.

Law schools base their admission decision on a variety of factors. Most importantly, your LSAT score and your grade point average will place you within the "ballpark" of a particular law school's admission criteria, but beyond the "numbers," admissions officers attempt to create a diverse student body comprised of interesting individuals. You can distinguish yourself by participating in extracurricular activities, involving yourself in the community in which you live, and getting to know faculty with whom you are studying and whom you will eventually ask to write letters of recommendation on your behalf. When you are ready to begin the application process, usually after the spring semester of your junior year, you should obtain the materials you will need to register for the LSAT and with the LSAC. Also, you should read my GUIDELINES FOR APPLYING TO LAW SCHOOL, which is a detailed outline of the steps to follow during the specific year's application period. These Guidelines are posted on my pre-law website. This website is periodically updated.

## SUGGESTED READING LIST

1. Please see my pre law website.
2. Please visit LSAC's website for information on studying for the LSAT; applying, choosing and financing law school, as well as many other related topics at: <http://www.lsac.org>
3. Most recent news articles about law schools and a legal career can be found on the following blogs:

[Wall Street Journal Law Blog](#)

[NY Times Law School Blog](#)

[Above the Law](#)