

Constructing an Academic Program: A Guide for Students Entering the Second Year of Law School



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Introduction

Now that you are approaching the end of your first-year course of study, your course choices for your next two years at NYU Law will be very much up to you. Designing a coherent plan of study that makes the most of what NYU Law offers and is tailored to your interests and career plans can be quite a daunting task. We offer close to three hundred courses! This guide attempts to simplify that task, by suggesting some issues that you should consider in planning your course of study and explaining the features and characteristics of NYU Law's course offerings. It also provides a planning guide to help you gather and use the information and advice you will need to develop the course of study that is best for you.

Considerations in Planning Your Curriculum

Before you start to wade through class schedules and course descriptions, you need to consider a number of options and opportunities that will make a difference in how you choose your courses. You must be sure your curriculum allows you to meet the Law School's graduation requirements, and you should decide as soon as possible if you will be away from the Law School for study abroad, a joint degree, or other reasons. You also should decide whether you want or ought to concentrate in any particular area of law. You also should determine if there are particular classes, that you want to take or particular instructors with whom you want to study. Finally, you need to decide what sorts of skills you would like to develop and experiences you would like to have during the next two years of law school.

Naturally, it is possible to plan your curriculum semester by semester rather than coming up with a two-year plan now. However, as this guide will show you, you will need to make a number of important decisions in planning your curriculum, and many of those decisions are better made thoughtfully and before you begin your second-year classes. This is particularly true in light of the fact that the Law School has a year-long registration system, which will permit you to register for both semesters next year before the fall semester begins. Of course, you can (and very likely will) change your mind about your interests and career plans during the next two years. Planning your curriculum now does not commit you to anything irreversible, but it does allow you to make the most of what NYU Law offers by making sure you know up front all the options that exist and the choices you need to make.

Other Planning Resources

As you plan your curriculum, you should take advantage of all of the information resources that are available to inform you about your options. These include:

Course Descriptions, available on the Academic Services web site (<http://www.law.nyu.edu/depts/acservices/courses/index.html>).

Course Schedule and Exam Schedule, issued each semester in conjunction with registration materials (also on the web site) (<http://its.law.nyu.edu/cms/public/schedules/> and <http://its.law.nyu.edu/cms/public/schedules/index.cfm?fuseaction=Exams.Main>).

Clinical Law Center Guide to Second Year Advocacy and Third Year Clinical Offerings, issued each spring by the Clinical Law Center (<http://www.law.nyu.edu/clinics/applications/index.html>).

NYU Law Student Handbook, provided to each student upon entering NYU Law, and available from the Office of Student Affairs (<http://www.law.nyu.edu/depts/studentaffairs/publications/handbook/index.html>).

Student Evaluations for Spring 2005 and forward are available online at <http://its.law.nyu.edu/CourseEval/>. Evaluations for prior semesters are available in the Office of Records and Registration and the Law Library (numerical data only).

Professors, Administrators, and Upperclass Students. Curriculum planning offers a great opportunity to get to know professors and to make contacts with mentors who can advise you throughout law school

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and your career as a lawyer. If you have a faculty advisor or feel comfortable with a particular member of the faculty, you should by all means feel free to consult with him or her. If not, you can sign up to consult with a member of the faculty through the NYU Law website. Either way, we strongly advise you to seek some individualized advice from someone on the faculty with whom you can discuss your particular needs and plans.

In addition to professors, the Office of Academic Services, the Office of Career Services, the Public Interest Law Center, and NYU Law student organizations can help you identify practitioners and others to provide additional advice and serve as mentors.

The Structure of Your Legal Studies

Graduation Requirements: Although you have a great deal of freedom in planning your courses for the next two years, you must be sure your plan fulfills the graduation requirements. These requirements are explained fully in the *Student Handbook*. You should get acquainted with them and keep them in mind throughout your planning.

Course Requirements:

see - <http://www.law.nyu.edu/depts/acservices/degrees/jd/course.html>

Refer to the following chart to determine your J.D. graduation requirements based on the year you began law school (whether at NYU or another law school):

Year student began studies	Fall 2005 and thereafter
Number of credits to graduate	83
First Year Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative and Regulatory State • Contracts • Criminal • Lawyering • Procedure • Property* • Torts • First Year Elective** <p>*Property, although a required course, may be taken in either the first or second year (but may not be taken in the third year). If Property is not elected in the first year, a student must take one of the four first year electives listed immediately below.</p> <p>**First-year electives: Constitutional Law, Corporations, Income Taxation or International Law</p>
Upperclass Required Courses	<p>Constitutional Law***; Professional Responsibility</p> <p>***Constitutional Law: If taken as a first year elective the requirement is satisfied</p>
Writing Requirements	One Substantial Writing

No more than 8 credits may be taken in certain courses taught by adjunct professors (indicated as such in the Schedule of Classes).

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No more than two courses may be taken on a credit/fail basis.

Certain activities for which students can earn credit towards the J.D. degree are designated non-classroom credits. No more than 20 non-classroom credits may be counted toward the J.D. degree with the following maximums in each category:

Category	Credits
Clinical Credits (not including clinic seminars)	12
Directed Research (two semesters)	5
Journals/Moot Court Board (2 credits for certain 3L editorial work)	2
Marden Competition	4
Teaching Assistantships	2
Non-law school classes counted towards the J.D.	10 (12 for joint degree students)

NOTE: Students beginning law school Fall 2004 or later must take 65 credits in regularly scheduled Law School classes. A student may take up to 20 non-classroom credits, but will have to compensate by taking additional classroom credits. (E.g. Students who take precisely 65 credits in regularly scheduled class sessions at the Law School must take a maximum of 18 non-classroom credits). Regularly scheduled class sessions at the Law School include (i) Law School courses and seminars; (ii) courses and seminars cross-listed between the Law School and other units of NYU; (iii) Law School Clinic Seminars; and (iv) the fieldwork for those clinics specified by the Office of Academic Services in an Online Curriculum Update. NOTE ALSO that non-law graduate credits are not included as regularly scheduled class sessions at the Law School.

Some students want to study subjects that may be tested on the bar examination. Keep in mind, however, that many of these subjects are covered in the first-year curriculum. In addition, the way such subjects are taught in the law school environment is not necessarily relevant to the way they are tested on the bar exam. Therefore, this probably should not be a significant consideration as you plan your legal education.

Writing is a very important part of your education and possibly the most important skill for you to master. Be sure to build a substantial research and writing component into your curriculum. You should be especially careful not to wait until the last minute to work on your substantial writing requirement, as it entails work in revising and rewriting. You may also want to use the paper as a writing sample.

Programs outside the Law School: You should also consider opportunities available outside the Law School that may have a significant impact on how you plan your curriculum. In particular, if you plan to **study abroad**, pursue a **joint degree**, take classes in other schools at NYU or elsewhere, or in any way **interrupt your studies**, you should factor this into your curriculum now.

Clinical Courses: You should think now about whether you will want to participate in a clinic during your third year. Most of the clinics offer the experience of working one-on-one with practicing attorneys and actual clients on real cases, transactions, and problems. In order to ensure clinic participants possess the substantive law knowledge necessary to handle these experiences, many of the clinics have course prerequisites. If you intend to apply to any of the clinics, you should find out about such requirements now and be sure you fulfill them during your second year. For information about the clinical program and prerequisites see the **Clinical Law Center Guide to Second Year Advocacy and Third Year Clinical Offerings**.

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Professor and Course Availability: You may have come to NYU Law hoping to study with a particular professor or to take a particular class. In addition, you may want to take a class taught by one of the numerous visiting professors and Global Law School faculty who visit NYU Law each year. If you want to take advantage of such opportunities, you should factor this into your curriculum planning and note that most professors change the classes they teach from year to year; not every professor and every class is available every term. In addition, most classes are normally taught only in one semester each year.

Should You Concentrate Courses in a Particular Area?

You may have found an area of law that interests you, and you may be considering whether to concentrate in a particular field of law during your second and third years. As you will see later in this guide, it is possible to develop expertise in a number of areas by taking advanced courses and seminars and following a course of study in a particular subject.

Many professors, employers, and practitioners feel that it is better to have a well-rounded legal education than to develop expertise in any particular field of law while in law school. Although you may find it interesting and challenging to become more knowledgeable in a particular area of law, limiting yourself to a small area of expertise may limit your employment prospects and deprive you of the opportunity to explore other fields and develop broad-based legal knowledge and skills. Also, you may change your mind. If you are uncertain about what field to concentrate in, it may be wise not to do so at all. Certainly, in some fields of legal practice it is considered helpful or even necessary to concentrate while in law school. But keep in mind how few courses you will be able to take in the next two years, and consider your options carefully before you decide.

Even if you decide not to concentrate, you may wish to take a sequence of courses in one or more subject areas. Suggested sequences in some common subject areas are provided in the appendix to this guide, and your professors and mentors can help you identify others.

The Objectives of Your Legal Education

You need to decide what you want to get out of your legal education before you go about planning your curriculum for the next two years.

“Core” Classes: In addition to classes that are formally required for graduation, there are certain classes that are regarded as essential or at least highly beneficial. These “core” courses are considered important to a course of legal study for two reasons: each teaches a branch of social organization and administration that is crucial to a well-rounded understanding of law and its application; and they are relevant to more than one area of law, and therefore provide a good overview of the issues involved in several fields.

In addition to constitutional law and professional responsibility, which you are required to take, the following classes are among those considered important to every law student’s curriculum:

An advanced course involving a statutory scheme (i.e. environmental law, commercial law, bankruptcy)
Corporations
Evidence
Income Taxation

While you need not take all of these courses, it will likely useful to take several of them.

Legal Skills: In addition to exposing students to a particular area of law, most courses also offer the chance to learn particular legal skills. You should consider choosing classes not only for their subject matter, but also for the skills they teach along the way. The following list gives some examples of classes and the legal skills they teach (note that many of the core courses cover several of these subject areas):

Legal Theory

Colloquia
Seminar courses

Writing and Research

Seminar courses
Clinics

Advocacy and Negotiation

Alternative Dispute Resolution
Arbitration
Constitutional Litigation
Criminal Litigation
Federal Courts & the Appellate Process
Second-year clinical simulation classes
Clinics
Trial Advocacy

Global Courses

Comparative Law
Law of the European Union
Law of War and International Criminal Courts
International Environmental Law
Law and Society in China

Statutory Interpretation

Banking Law
Bankruptcy
Copyright
Employment Discrimination
Environmental Law
Labor Law
New York Practice
Patent Law
Taxation courses
Uniform Commercial Code courses

Document Drafting

Real Estate Deals
Financing Development
Corporate Bonds

Constitutional Theory and Analysis

Administrative and Constitutional History
Colloquium in Legal, Political and Social
Philosophy
Constitutional Litigation
Criminal Procedure
Federal Courts and the Federal System
Federalist Papers
Legal Philosophy
Race, Values and the American Legal
Process

Variables among Courses

As you have already seen, upperclass courses vary widely in their subject matter and in the skills they teach. There are a number of other variables in the formats of classes. Although the class schedule is arranged according to subject matter, you should understand these other ways in which classes may differ from one another. There are differences among classes in prerequisites and course requirements. NYU Law's classes generally fall into four categories: surveys, seminars, colloquia, and clinics. From your first-year classes, you are already very familiar with one of the major class formats - the large lecture/discussion-style survey.

Lecture-style classes survey a field or area of law. Some are quite broad, but many are focused on subfields or particular methodologies. The choices are quite varied in this respect. Survey classes only rarely have prerequisites. For example, Income Taxation is a prerequisite for Corporate Taxation. Surveys usually require a final examination, although some professors may offer the option of or require a paper. In those classes where a final examination is given, the examination format may be either in-class or take-home. Professors have different rules about the types of materials to which students may refer during examinations. Please refer to the exam schedule and the course descriptions.

A seminar or colloquium is a small class; some have as few as five students, while others may be as large as 28 students. Seminars and colloquia provide a more detailed examination of a subject than is possible in a survey, and class presentation entails significantly more discussion and student participation. Some seminars and colloquia will have a prerequisite, often a corresponding survey class. Seminars and colloquia normally require students to write one or more papers. A colloquium differs from a seminar in that several professors (and occasionally outside guests) participate in the colloquium, preparing papers and articles to which the students in the class respond through discussion and written

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assignments. Sometimes a seminar is offered in conjunction with the colloquium and students may be required to enroll in both. This can be a marvelously demanding and engaging in-depth study of the area.

Clinics can be of two basic types: simulation-style clinics (also referred to as "second-year clinics") and advanced clinics. More advanced clinics (usually taken in the third year) involve actual client representation under the intensive supervision of a faculty member. The latter often have a required seminar component as well. Check the guide to clinical courses published each year by the clinical program for full descriptions and prerequisites. Clinic grades are usually based on performance in the clinic and its attendant seminar, if any.

With respect to exams, you should check the exam schedule for your classes before registering, to make sure that your exams do not conflict or are not bunched uncomfortably close together. Do not assume that you will be able to change your exam schedule later, as the rules are fairly strict. Check the *Student Handbook*. Furthermore, a limited number of classes are offered each semester with the option of receiving a grade of Credit or Fail instead of a letter grade. In deciding whether to exercise this option, you should consult with professors and mentors about the wisdom of forgoing a letter grade for a particular course. In addition, you should keep in mind that you may take only two classes on a Credit/Fail basis, and that once exercised, this option is irrevocable.

Planning Guide

Designing a curriculum for your next two years of legal study is a challenge. Your curriculum must fulfill NYU Law's graduation requirements, fit into your career goals, deal with the availability of courses and professors, and, of course, provide you with an enjoyable course of study. We suggest that you plan the next two years in advance as much as possible, and that you follow the steps described in this planning guide in designing your curriculum.

STEP ONE: Figure out your goals and interests and how they will affect your plan.

You should consider and make a decision about each of the various factors discussed in this guide. The following are some of the questions you might ask yourself to determine your goals and interests and how they affect your curriculum plan.

What are your career plans or goals?

This broad question may best be addressed by considering some subsidiary questions:

Are there particular legal skills you want to learn?

- Legal Theory
- Writing and Research
- Advocacy and Negotiation
- Statutory Interpretation
- Constitutional Theory and Analysis
- Transactional Planning

What kind of practice approaches or environments are you interested in?

- Private firm: litigation, transaction
- Governmental: clerkship, regulatory, litigation, public policy
- Public interest: litigation, community development, criminal
- Academic
- International

Are there particular subject areas that interest you?

The course schedule is organized into subject categories that may assist you in identifying subject areas in which you have an interest.

How do you plan to meet the requirements for graduation?

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In what order should you plan to take the “core” classes?

Do you plan to seek a clerkship?

If so, you may want to take a seminar in the fall of your second year both to ensure that you have a writing sample and to receive a letter of recommendation from a faculty member who will know your work and your abilities.

Are there classes that sound fun or interesting to you?

Remember, this may be your last opportunity to take a class just “for fun,” and to gain exposure to an area of law you may never again encounter. Be sure to save room in your curriculum for such classes!

Do you plan to study abroad?

If so, you need to determine how to meet your graduation requirements prior to departure and be sure you can receive academic credit for your foreign studies.

Do you plan to pursue a joint degree?

If so, you need to determine how to meet your graduation requirements for both degree programs, and determine when you will be in residence at the Law School. You should consult with the Office of Academic Services.

Do you plan to apply to participate in a clinic in your third year?

If so, you need to find out whether there are course prerequisites for the clinic(s) to which you plan to apply. See the clinic guide booklet published annually. In addition, keep in mind that many clinics carry from 8 to 14 credits and therefore comprise most of the third-year course load, so you should plan to take most of your other electives in your second year.

Is there a particular professor with whom you want to study?

If so, you should review the schedule of classes for that professor’s offerings in the year to come, and make an appointment with the professor to find out about those offerings and his/her future course offerings.

Is there a particular class you want to be sure to take?

If the class is scheduled to be taught in the next year, you may wish to take it at the first opportunity, in case the class is not available or oversubscribed in your third year. (Keep in mind, however, that all graduating students—third-year J.D. students and graduating LL.M. students—have priority for admission to oversubscribed classes.) If you don’t see this class on the schedule for the next year, you should consult the professor who normally teaches the class to determine if it will be offered during your third year so that you can save room in your schedule.

STEP TWO: *Gather information and advice.*

It is practically impossible to plan a well-rounded course of legal study without complete information and outside advice. Refer to the resources listed above to have all the tools necessary to make choices and decisions.

STEP THREE: *Draft a two-year plan.*

Once you have gathered information and advice to guide you in deciding on your goals for your legal education, you can design a provisional two-year curriculum. Keep in mind that this plan is likely to change as new courses are offered, as faculty and course availability change, and as your personal interests and goals evolve.

Remember that a fair number of courses may be oversubscribed in any given semester. Subject to the general preference for graduating students, the registration lottery will assign spaces for all courses

except those requiring permission of the instructor. Therefore you cannot be guaranteed a seat in every course of your choosing. Happily, there is such a large number of courses offered each semester that you should have no trouble planning an alternative schedule. You can always add courses during the "drop-add" period in the first week of each semester.

A worksheet and appendix have been attached to help you draft a provisional two-year plan.

Second Year: Fall Semester

Course Title	Credits	Prerequisites?	Requirements met?

Credits This Semester:

Total Credits to Date:

Second Year: Spring Semester

Course Title	Credits	Prerequisites?	Requirements met?

Credits This Semester:

Total Credits to Date:

Third Year: Fall Semester

Course Title	Credits	Prerequisites?	Requirements met?

Credits This Semester:

Total Credits to Date:

Third Year: Spring Semester

Course Title	Credits	Prerequisites?	Requirements met?

Credits This Semester:

Total Credits to Date:

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APPENDIX

The following are suggested class selections for a variety of concentration areas. These are designed for students who want to concentrate in a particular subject area. As you can see, in many subject areas there are more courses than any single student can take in the second and third years of law school. As with all of the resources in this guide, these are suggestions, not directives. Also, they are intended to be only a part of a well-rounded education, as emphasized throughout this guide. Thus, it is assumed that whatever the specialty, each student will take the "core" courses described earlier as well as courses that examine the law from a critical, comparative and interdisciplinary standpoint. (N.B. This list is not exhaustive. In any particular year, the school may offer additional courses or not offer some of the courses listed below. Check the registration materials.)

CIVIL LITIGATION

Surveys:

Evidence
Federal Courts and the Federal System
Conflict of Laws

Advanced courses:

Alternate Dispute Resolution
Art of Appellate Decision Making
Civil Litigation
Civil and Criminal Trial Practice
Federal Courts and the Appellate Process
Constitutional Litigation
International Arbitration
International Litigation
Negotiation Theory
Trial Advocacy
Trial and Appellate Advocacy

Clinics:

Government Civil Litigation Clinic

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

Surveys:

Constitutional Law
First Amendment Rights of Expression and Association
Immigration Law

Advanced courses:

Art Law
Advanced Topics in Art Law
Constitutional Litigation
Constitutions and the Treatment of Gender
Current Issues in Immigrants' Rights
Local Government Law
Selected Issues in Immigration Law and Policy

Clinics:

Immigrant Rights Clinic
Supreme Court Litigation Clinic

CORPORATE AND COMMERCIAL LAW

Surveys:

Accounting for Lawyers
Bankruptcy
Banking Law and Regulation
Commercial Law (Sales Law, Payment Systems, Secured Transactions)

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Corporations

Advanced Courses:

Business Crime
Corporate Finance
Corporate Taxation
Economic Analysis of Law
Employment Discrimination
Employment Law
Environmental Law
International Business Transactions
International Trade Regulation
Mergers and Acquisitions
Securities Regulation
[See extensive listings under Corporate and Commercial Law on the Course Description website; see also the list of courses offered by the Stern School of Business recommended for law students.]

CRIMINAL LAW

Surveys:

Business Crime
Criminal Procedure

Advanced courses:

Complex Federal Investigations
Corruption and Corruption Control
Criminal Litigation
Organized Crime Control

Clinics:

Capital Defender Clinic
Comparative Criminal Justice Clinic
Criminal and Community Defense Clinic
Federal Defender Clinic
Prosecution Clinic

ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

Surveys:

Environmental Law
Land Use Regulation
Law and Economics
Local Government Law

Advanced courses:

Land Use, Housing and Development in NYC
Community Development Law

Clinics:

Environmental Law Clinic
International Environmental Clinic

**INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY /
TRADE REGULATION**

Surveys:

Copyright Law
Patent Law
Survey of Copyright, Patent & Trademark Law
Trademarks
[Survey of Copyright, Patent and Trademark is recommended instead of individual classes in each subject only for students who do not wish to specialize in the intellectual property area.]

Advanced Courses:

Antitrust and Regulatory Alternatives II or Antitrust II

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International Trade Regulation
Patent Law II
[See extensive additional listings under Trade Regulation on the Course Description website.]

INTERNATIONAL LAW

Surveys:

International and Comparative Law
Comparative Law
Conflict of Laws
The Civil Law System

Advanced Courses:

Comparative Competition Law
Comparative Constitutional Law
From Roman to Modern Law: Abortion, Homosexuality and Capital Punishment
Global Public Service Lawyering: Theory and Practice
International Arbitration
International Law and Politics
International Litigation
Law and Society in China
Transitional Justice in Times of Transition
International Human Rights
[See extensive listings under International Legal Studies on the Course Description website.]

Clinics:

Comparative Criminal Justice Clinic
International Environmental Law Clinic
International Human Rights Clinic

LABOR & EMPLOYMENT LAW

Surveys:

Employment Law
Employment Discrimination Law
Labor Law

Advanced courses:

Appellate and Legislative Advocacy Workshop:
Current Labor and Employment Docket
Employee Pension and Health Benefits Law
Race and Legal Scholarship

Clinic:

Civil Rights Clinic

PUBLIC INTEREST LAW

Surveys:

[Public interest law can take many different directions, so each student's program should be guided by his own interests. Some suggestions follow.]
Alternative Dispute Resolution
Employment Law [or Employment Discrimination]
Federal Courts and the Federal System
International Law
Land Use Regulation
Law of Nonprofit Organizations
Local Government Law

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Advanced Courses: Civil Litigation
Constitutional Litigation
Education Law
Federal Courts and the Appellate Process
Health Law
Law and Economics
Law and Social Policy
Community Development Law
Race and Legal Scholarship
Race, Values and the American Legal Process
Sex Discrimination Law
Trial Advocacy

Clinics: Civil Rights Clinic
Criminal and Community Defense Clinic
Family Defense Clinic
Juvenile Defender Clinic
Public Policy Advocacy Clinic

REAL ESTATE

Surveys: Environmental Law
Land Use Regulation
Real Estate Transactions
Taxation of Property Transactions
Trusts and Estates

Advanced courses: Accounting for Lawyers
Land Use, Housing and Development in NYC
Local Government Law
Community Development Law

Clinics: Environmental Law Clinic

TAX

Surveys: Income Taxation
Corporate Taxation
Taxation of Property Transactions
Estate and Gift Tax

Advanced Courses: [See extensive listings online, or consult with the Director of the Tax Program.]