**RPOS/RPAD 397**

**THINKING AHEAD: LAW SCHOOL AND LEGAL CAREERS**

**FALL 2022**

**(10/12/2022)**

Course Time: Mondays, 3:00PM–4:40PM

Location: Social Science 116

Instructor: Julie Novkov, jnovkov@albany.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-4 PM in Milne 102B or by appointment (HU 16)

Zoom link: https://albany.zoom.us/my/jnovkov

Co-Facilitators:

Kelly Hammond – coordinates interactions with alumni speakers and guests

Zakhar Berkovich – provides overall support to the course

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This one-credit course will help students who are interested in applying to law school and pursuing legal careers to understand what law school is and how to develop a successful application and to get a look at the kinds of careers people pursue with a law degree. Drawing on our faculty, our alumni network, and friends of Rockefeller College, several class sessions will feature guest speakers to introduce students to a range of career pathways followed by people with JD degrees. Using readings, our guests’ resumes, and other tools, students will learn more about how the law school application process works, understand the connection between the work they do in the classroom and on campus, and consider the career paths that a JD opens up after graduation. The course will also provide students an opportunity to practice and fine-tune the skills they will need for the law school application process, and to think proactively about whether a JD is the best path forward.

Upon completion of the course, students should:

* Appreciate the connection between academic opportunities and behaviors in college and post-graduate success,
* Understand the law school application process, including how to identify an appropriate range of schools to which to apply;
* Be familiar with a range of careers for which a JD is good preparation, and
* Exhibit clear understanding of whether going to law school now or in the future is the right choice.

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

Each class will meet for approximately an hour and 55 minutes. In the first class, we will review format and expectations. Some classes will provide direct focus on law school and the law school application process. Others will feature alumni visitors. For these class sessions, student cohosts will use the first few minutes to introduce the speakers (approximately 5 minutes.) Our visitors will then give a formal presentation for approximately half an hour or a bit longer. We will then have the opportunity to ask questions of our guests, and after they have departed, debrief for the remainder of the class. Some visitors will be available afterward for informal engagement.

NOTE: Occasionally speakers will cancel or change their presentation days with little prior notice. If this happens, we will notify you as soon as we learn that this has happened. We will maintain an updated schedule of visitors on the course’s Blackboard site.

**REQUIRED READINGS**

All readings will be posted on the Blackboard website.

**ATTENDANCE/CLASS PARTICIPATION**

This class depends on your active engagement in the classroom and online prior to the class. Your attendance will be graded. Students who arrive on time and give our guest presenters their engaged attention will earn full points for that class’s session. The point system for attendance has a cap of 5, so if an illness or emergency causes you to miss a class, you will not be penalized.

Please note that our speakers are important individuals and alumni who have graciously donated their time to the university. Students who arrive late to class or leave early can be disruptive to our speakers; moreover, arriving late and/or leaving early reflects poorly on students themselves. Given that the course will be conducted in an online format, we will let students into the class if they are late, but we will deduct half a point from your participation grade for any class session for which you are more than 5 minutes late, and you will receive no points for classes you do not attend. There are no make-up assignments for missed classroom time, though we will try to record class sessions with guests who attend via Zoom.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**Questions**

Before each class for which we have visitors, you will review the presenters’ biographies/resumes/CVs, read any additional assigned readings, and submit on the Blackboard Question Assignment three questions that you would like to pose to the guest speakers for that week. I will grade your questions on their quality and insightfulness. Be sure to bring your questions to class so that you can ask them! **Submissions are due the Thursday before class by 11:59 PM. You will not receive credit for late submissions.**

**Reflections on speakers**

After each class where we have guests, you will be required to submit a short reflection on the visitors. You can address the speakers’ career paths and how they relate to your interests, comment on the reading, or provide your observation of the class. Each entry should be between 150 and 200 words. I will grade your reflections on their quality and insightfulness. **Submissions are due by the Wednesday after the class by 11:59 PM.** At the instructor’s discretion, late reflections may be accepted for half credit.

**Thank you to speakers**

For one class session during the semester, you will write a formal thank you note (via email) to a guest presenter. If you complete this assignment successfully, you will receive full credit.

**Practice LSAT (October 24)**

Take a practice LSAT and score it. Be sure to read the assigned readings on the LSAT. Write a short reflection on what you learned from taking the practice test, using the following questions for guides:

* What felt easy about the test? What seemed hard?
* Do you believe your score on the practice test reflected your level of academic strength?
* Based on your reading and your experience, is the LSAT a good tool to help decide law school admission, an at least partially consciously constructed barrier to limit access to the legal profession, or both?

**Identifying potential law schools (October 31)**

Using the lawschooltransparency.org website and any other useful resources, identify three law schools for which you think you might be a good match. Write short explanations for why you have chosen each. Things to consider:

* Selectivity and your anticipated profile
* Geography
* The law school’s placement record
* Net cost

**Draft personal statement (November 7)**

Develop a solid first draft of a law school personal statement.

**Letter of recommendation request (November 14)**

Identify three people who would be good options for letters of recommendation for you. For each person you identify, do the following two things:

* Draft a brief, polite email that you would use to request the letter
* Write a short paragraph explaining why you believe this person would be a good choice as a recommender.

**Final Reflection Paper (December 15)**

Considering all of the visitors this semester, the assigned readings, the writing you have done, and your own reflective process, explain what you see as your best path forward. If you remain committed to applying to law school, explain your strategy. If you have decided not to apply to law school or are unsure about doing so, explain what has led you to this place and how you imagine yourself going forward. Regardless, be sure to identify your next steps to position yourself to head down the path that is right for you.

The written reflection should be 1,000-2,000 words in length (not including footnotes and references), include at least three references in APA format (cited in the text of the reflection and listed in a references page at the end of the paper), use 12-point Times New Roman or similar font, and have 1-inch margins. You may certainly rely on the readings assigned for the course for this assignment. **Papers are due on Blackboard by December 13 at 11:59 PM. Late submissions will not be accepted.**

**EXTRA CREDIT**

**Letters to Successors**

Please share your thoughts on the semester—its presenters, format, assignments, or any other detail—in the form of a letter to next semester’s students. Your thoughtful responses will help shape future iterations of this course. **This assignment must be submitted by MONDAY DECEMBER 5 at 11:59 PM in order to receive 3 extra credit points.**

**GRADING**

All written work in the class will be graded; other assignments designated above are credit/no credit. You should strive to make all of the assignments flawless in presentation.

**GRADE SCALE**

A 92.5-100   
A- 90-92.4

B+ 87-89.9  
B 83-86.9  
B- 80-82.9  
C+ 77-79.9  
C 73-76.9  
C- 70-72.9  
D 60-69.9  
E Below 60

**GRADE COMPONENTS**

Attendance (1 point per session) 5 points

Questions (3 points per session): 12 points

Journals: (5 points per session): 20 points

Thank you: (5 points): 5 points

Practice LSAT 10 points

Law schools 10 points

Personal Statement: 10 points

LOR request: 8 points

Final reflection 20 points

**COURSE POLICIES**

All course policies are listed after the class schedule. Be sure to review carefully, as the professor has specific policies in addition to the University’s general policies. If you have questions about any course policy, ask sooner rather than later.

**CLASS SCHEDULE – Visitor confirmation in progress. Please note that the presentations are tentative and some of our guests have jobs that may entail unexpected last-minute demands. If we need to reschedule, we will provide you with notice as soon as we receive it ourselves. Also please attend to the notes on the readings; some are quite lengthy and I have only recommended portions of them.**

October 17 Introduction to the course

* A. Benjamin Spencer, “The Law School Critique in Historical Perspective” (all recommended when you have time; please review pp. 2015-2020, 2039-2047, and 2054-2063)

October 24 The law school application process

* Diane Curtis, “The LSAT and the Reproduction of Hierarchy” (skim)
* Rachel Moran, “The Three Ages of Modern American Lawyering and the Current Crisis in the Legal Profession and Legal Education” (all recommended when you have time; please skim pp. 485-522)

PRACTICE LSAT ASSIGNMENT DUE

October 31 The law school experience

* Susan Grover and Nikeshia Womack, “Stories at the Edge of Class—Marginalization in the Law School Experience” (skim this article)

IDENTIFYING LAW SCHOOLS ASSIGNMENT DUE

November 7 Guest speakers

DRAFT PERSONAL STATEMENT DUE

November 14 Guest speakers

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION REQUEST ASSIGNMENT DUE

November 21 Guest speakers

November 28 Guest speakers

December 3 Class wrap up

#### POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR THIS CLASS

**Classroom etiquette**

Remember that you are a representative of the college and be sure to be on time, attentive, and polite with our guests. In class discussions, work to build and maintain an atmosphere of collaboration and respect.

**Students with disabilities**

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with the professor soon to discuss accommodations. Please request that Disabilities Resource Center send a letter verifying your disability.

**Plagiarism or cheating**

This one’s simple: don’t do it. Don’t even think about doing it. Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s words or ideas without giving the original author credit by citing them. If you use someone else’s language directly, you must use quotation marks. If you rely on another person’s ideas in creating your argument, you must provide a citation. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please contact me *before* you submit the assignment for grading. If you plagiarize or cheat in this class, the **BEST** outcome you can hope to achieve is a failing grade from me, in addition to any mandatory university sanctions. Plagiarism or cheating, even if unintentional, will result in a failing grade for the assignment at the *very minimum*. Resources are provided above.

**Regrading of materials**

You may request regrading of materials. If you wish to make such a request, contact the professor for a copy of the regrading policy. You will be asked to provide a written explanation of why you wish to have the assignment regraded.

**Incomplete grades**

A course grade of incomplete will only be assigned if 1) almost all assignments and tests have been completed, 2) the professor and student discuss and agree upon the I grade before the term has ended, and 3) the professor and student have developed a clear plan and timetable for completing the work in a short time after the term has ended.

**University Resources and Policy Information**

**Incomplete Grades (from the Undergraduate Bulletin).** No graduation credit. A temporary grade requested by the student and assigned by the instructor ONLY when the student has nearly completed the course requirements but because of circumstances beyond the student’s control the work is not completed. The incomplete should only be assigned on the basis of an agreement between the instructor and the student specifying the work to be completed and establishing a general timeline in which the work will be completed. Incompletes may NOT be resolved by auditing or registering again for a subsequent offering of the course. The date for the completion of the work may not be longer than one month before the end of the semester following that in which the incomplete is received. Once the work is completed, the instructor assigns the appropriate academic grade. The instructor may extend an incomplete for a maximum of one semester beyond the original deadline providing that the student has made contact with the instructor to request the extension. Additional extensions are NOT permitted. Any grade of I existing after the stated deadline shall be automatically changed to E or U according to whether or not the student is enrolled for A–E or S/U grading. Except for extenuating circumstances approved by the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, these converted grades may not be later changed.

**Reasonable accommodations for student with documented disabilities**. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 130, 518-442-5490, DRC@albany.edu). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations.

**Absence due to religious observance.** Students are excused, without penalty, to be absent because of religious beliefs, and will be provided equivalent opportunities for make-up examinations, study, or work requirements missed because of such absences. Students should notify the instructor of record in a timely manner, and the instructor will work directly with students to accommodate religious observances. Online courses will not schedule any assignment deadlines on religious holidays.

**Standards of Academic Integrity (from the Undergraduate Bulletin).** The academic community needs to trust that its members do not misrepresent their data, take credit for another's ideas or labor, misrepresent or interfere with the work of other scholars, or present previous work as if it were new. Acts of academic dishonesty undermine the value and credibility of the institution as a whole, and may distract others from important scholarship or divert resources away from critical research. In particular, students who plagiarize or falsify their work not only fail to adhere to the principles of scholarly inquiry and fail their peers by taking undeserved credit or reward, but they also fail to demonstrate their learning.

Practicing Academic Integrity Site: <https://library.albany.edu/infolit/playlists/academic-integrity>. This site provides access to concise and engaging educational resources that will help students navigate through the complexities surrounding information use and creation in today’s digital environment. Acknowledging the work of others through citation (and its flip side, plagiarism), copyright, the ethics of sharing information in different formats, and the importance of contributing one’s own voice to academic conversations are all highlighted. Students should consult syllabi, their instructors, and in relevant circumstances their advisors for information about specific policies on academic integrity.

Citation Tools: The University Libraries offers a wide variety of citation tools which may be found at <https://libguides.library.albany.edu/citationhelp>. These resources include citation generators and more extensive citation management tools, such as Zotero, Citation generators are websites or mobile apps that automatically format citations and bibliographies. Also available is CitationFox, an extensive resource developed by UAlbany librarians that provides citation guidance and examples for both the MLA and APA style.

**Counseling and Psychological Services Center**

CAPS (518-442-5800; Dutch Quad) offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus resources. More information can be found at

<https://www.albany.edu/health-well-being/mental-health/caps>

**Writing Center**

The university offers a number of services for students who need assistance with writing and research projects. Support is available in the Writing Center (518-442-4061; 140 HU) and at the University Library. Information about the Writing Center can be found at

<http://www.albany.edu/writing/index.html>

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|  | Title IX Statement |

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in federally funded education programs and activities. The SUNY-wide Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Policies prohibit offenses defined as sexual harassment, sexual assault, intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), sexual exploitation, and stalking. The SUNY-wide Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Policies apply to the entire University at Albany community, including students, faculty, and staff of all gender identities. The University at Albany provides a variety of resources for support and advocacy to assist individuals who have experienced sexual offenses.

Confidential support and guidance can be found through the Counseling Center (518-442-5800, <https://www.albany.edu/health-well-being/mental-health/caps> ), the University Health Center (518-442-5454, <https://www.albany.edu/health_center/>), and the Interfaith Center (518-489-8573, <https://www.albany.edu/spirituality/onCampus.shtml>). Individuals at these locations will not report crimes to law enforcement or university officials without permission, except for in extreme circumstances, such as a health and/or safety emergency. Additionally, the Advocates at the University at Albany’s Advocacy Center for Sexual Violence are available to assist students without sharing information that could identify them (518-442-CARE, <https://www.albany.edu/advocacycenter/>).

Sexual offenses can be reported non-confidentially to the Title IX Coordinator within The Office for Equity and Compliance (518-442-3800, <https://www.albany.edu/equity-compliance/>, Building 25, Room 117) and/or the University Police Department (518-442-3131, <http://police.albany.edu/>).

Please note, faculty members are considered “responsible employees” at the University at Albany, meaning that they are required to report all known relevant details about a complaint of sexual violence to the University’s Title IX Coordinator, including names of anyone involved or present, date, time, and location. In case of an emergency, please call 911.