What Classes Should I Take?

Students frequently ask me for advice concerning courses to take and how to plan their law school career. These suggestions are mine and you should always feel free to seek advice from your professors, Office of Career Services counselor, mentors and employers and former and fellow students, all of whom may have other ideas and suggestions from their respective perspectives.

**Required Courses:** In addition to the first year classes, all students must take PR, Con Law II, an Edited Writing Course (denoted with an EW in the Registration Materials), a General Writing Course (GW) and a Professional Skills Course (PS). Note that a second EW can substitute for the GW requirement but a GW cannot be used to satisfy the EW requirement. I have attached a Degree Planning Worksheet that outlines graduation requirements and encourage you to determine which requirements you still need.

Please do not wait until your last semester to satisfy graduation requirements (or to complete your 30 hours of public service). Scheduling conflicts can arise if you try to take many required courses in your last semester. In addition, writing courses can be an opportunity to research and explore, in depth, an area of the law that particularly interests you and then to write a scholarly paper under the guidance of our outstanding faculty. This is a luxury it will be very difficult, if not impossible for many, to experience after they leave law school.

**Bar Courses:** Students frequently ask me how many Bar Courses they should take. Bar Courses are listed in the Registration Materials. It is important to take enough Bar Courses so that the Bar Review course you take is truly a bar review and not a bar NEW! It is impossible to take all the courses that are tested on the Texas Bar Exam. But if you are in Mandatory Academic Counseling (students with a GPA below 2.7) you must take at least two (and preferably three Bar Courses if you are a full time student) each semester. Even if you are not in MAC, it is a good idea to take at least a couple of Bar Courses each semester.

It is also important to take a variety of Bar Courses. Bar Courses tend to cover “People Law”, (i.e., practice areas that a lawyer with individual (rather than corporate clients) may handle. This includes things like Consumer Law, Oil and Gas, Real Estate, Family and Marital Property Law, Wills and Trusts, etc. I recommend that you try to take a few of these courses. The Bar Exam also tests Texas Criminal and Civil Procedure heavily. Even if you are not going to be a litigator, you should try to take at least one course in this area. In addition, Uniform Commercial Code courses are tested. Taking one or more classes such as Secured Transactions, Sales or Payment Systems, is important so you will become more familiar with the UCC and these issues.

**Specializations:** Many important courses are not tested on the Bar Exam. These include Securities Regulations, Intellectual Property, International Law, Antitrust or Environmental Law. Nevertheless, if you have an interest in any of these areas, you should take the basic classes and then discuss which upper level electives you want to explore with faculty who teach in these areas and specializations. The practice guides on the handout wall outside the Registrar’s Office identify courses and other resources in a number of different practice areas.

We offer a rich variety of elective courses each semester. Choose courses that interest you or that you believe might help you in your practice. Sometimes a student will take an elective and have an epiphany that this is the area of law that they want to choose for their practice.