

CURRICULUM

Many law students are surprised to learn that law schools typically do not expect or require students to follow particular curriculum tracks or specialties. At Georgetown, students have very few pre-requisites for graduation beyond the first year curriculum. Most legal employers similarly do not require that students take particular courses during law school. While some employers with specialty practice areas will expect that applicants have taken at least a basic law course or two in their substantive areas, most do not require specialization beyond that. Many public interest employers, however, do want to see a demonstrated commitment to the people or issues they represent, and the courses and clinics you choose to take at law school can be one way to show such commitment. Georgetown has one of the largest and most diverse public interest curriculums of any law school, so you have a lot of options available to you. This section is intended to provide advice and guidance on the upperclass curriculum so that you can choose the right courses given your career as well as academic goals.

1. Consider which “core” courses you should take.

Georgetown offers a range of what many law students and professors consider “core” upperclass courses. These are typically courses that involve a subject matter relevant to or cutting across a wide variety of practice areas and settings. Examples include: Administrative Law, Constitutional Law II, Evidence, Criminal Law, Corporations, Tax, Legislation, and Decedents Estates.

Of these courses, you should give serious consideration to *Administrative Law* and *Constitutional Law II*. Con Law II is Georgetown Law’s basic course in free speech, due process, and equal protection of the law. *Administrative Law* addresses the legal framework for and issues related to government regulatory agencies, which many public interest lawyers will deal with during their professional careers. Some public interest advocates believe that *Corporations* is also an important course given the role that corporations play in society. You might want to consider *Legislation* as well, which studies the theory and doctrine of statutory interpretation and provides an introduction to the legislative process; much public interest advocacy happens in the legislative arena. Finally, if you are interested in litigating you should take *Evidence*, which is also a prerequisite for a number of clinics.

You might also consider other core courses that aren’t as directly relevant to your career plans, because they involve law that has relevance to a wide range of people. Decedents Estates, for example, involves the law of wills and trusts, which will be important to many individuals and families at some point in their lives. Similarly, Tax I is concerned with personal tax issues, an area that many students find of general interest.

There is no right or wrong in terms of which core courses students should take. You should seek advice from a variety of sources—faculty, academic and career advisors, and students—and then decide which courses seem right for *you*.

2. **Participate in at least one clinic, externship, or experiential learning course.**

Georgetown's curriculum offers a number of opportunities through which you can engage in actual legal work under the guidance and supervision of faculty members. Public interest employers greatly value such training, and our 12 clinics, externship program, and growing number of experiential learning courses are fabulous vehicles for obtaining such training.

Clinics – In a clinic, students work on actual cases or other legal matters under the supervision of a full-time faculty member and graduate fellow. All of the clinics represent clients under-represented in the legal system or advocate on matters of importance to the public interest. Thus, the clinics offer students a unique opportunity to serve the public while gaining first-hand insight into the strategic and ethical dimensions of the profession. For many public interest students, a clinic is often the best of all worlds—a great educational experience, a terrific resume builder, and a good source of future mentors and contacts.

Most of the clinics focus on one or more specific substantive areas, although students should not feel compelled to only consider the clinic that best matches their interests. In fact, some students choose a clinic for the *type* of legal work undertaken—litigation, transactional, legislative, or legal education—rather than the subject matter. Georgetown's 12 clinical programs are:

Appellate Litigation Clinic – litigates appellate civil and criminal cases in federal and District of Columbia courts

Center for Applied Legal Studies – represents refugees who are seeking political asylum in the United States

Criminal Justice Clinic – defends indigent persons accused of misdemeanor violations in both jury and non-jury trials in the District of Columbia Superior Court

D.C. Law Students in Court – represents clients in the Landlord and Tenant and Small Claims branches of the DC Superior Court

D.C. Street Law Program – teaches practical law to local high school students

Domestic Violence Clinic – represents victims of domestic violence in civil protection order cases in the DC Superior Court

Federal Legislation Clinic – represents clients in the federal legislative process by researching bills and drafting proposed statutory and report language

Harrison Institute for Public Law: Housing & Community Development Clinic - represents community tenant groups in obtaining ownership of multi-family housing

Harrison Institute for Public Law: Policy Clinic – serves legislators, public officials and nonprofit organizations in the areas of community development, economic issues, health, and trade

Institute for Public Representation – represents disadvantaged groups and individuals before courts and administrative agencies in the areas of civil rights, communications law and policy, and environmental issues

International Women's Human Rights Clinic – assists Africa-based organizations seeking to enhance the rights of women in the areas of sexual harassment, domestic violence, polygamy, and female genital mutilation

Juvenile Justice Clinic - defends minors charged with misdemeanors and felonies in delinquency proceedings in the District of Columbia Superior Court.

The clinic application process takes place each spring for the following year. You should fully explore each clinic that is of interest by: 1) checking its webpage via www.law.georgetown.edu/clinics; 2) attending the Clinic Curriculum Fair in March; and 3) talking with clinical professors and graduate fellows. Then think seriously about whether and how a clinic advances your overall career goals. Clinics are not necessarily for everyone, but many public interest students describe their clinical experience as the best experience they had in law school.

Externships – The externship program allows students to earn two credits by engaging in field work in an outside non-profit, government, or judicial setting while taking a course in a related area of the law. Not as intensive as a clinic, externships still offer students a great opportunity to integrate practical training with classroom work. They also are an excellent way to explore different public interest or government legal settings and particular employers. You may only do one externship, and not at the same time as a clinic, so choose the employer and timeframe wisely. More information can be found at www.law.georgetown.edu/registrar/externship.html.

Experiential learning courses – These courses combine traditional academic coursework with a field work component, giving students the chance to apply their academic learning concurrently in a practice setting. Currently, seven experiential learning courses are offered: Wrongful Convictions, Animal Protection Litigation Seminar, Death Penalty Litigation Seminar, State and Local Government Lawyering, Motherhood and Criminality, Local Dynamics of Immigration Law & Policy, and U.S. Voting Rights: A Practical Perspective.

3. You may formally or informally specialize in a practice area through a certificate program or your own course selections.

Georgetown is fortunate to have a large and diverse curriculum, and students can pursue their own “concentration” if they so choose. Our environmental curriculum, for example, consists of at least 18 different course offerings. (You can check out course offerings by subject area online at www.law.georgetown.edu/academic.) Some public interest students choose to engage in such concentration, while others do not. Public interest employers are typically as or more interested in your practical experiences than specific coursework, although taking at least a basic course in a relevant subject matter is often assumed if not expected. Students who do take a multitude of courses in particular subject matters often will highlight them in their resumes and/or cover letters. Doing so can help you distinguish yourself, but remember that coursework alone is unlikely to make you competitive in the public interest job market. You should complement your doctrinal coursework with clinical or other experiential learning courses, legal internships, or other relevant experience.

Georgetown Law offers two formal certificate programs that you might want to consider depending on your fields of interest. The *Certificate in Refugees and Humanitarian Emergencies* focuses on human rights and humanitarian issues, with a special focus on refugees and post-conflict situations. Many students with a career goal of working with immigrants or on human rights issues are drawn to this certificate program. The *WTO Studies Certificate* offers the opportunity for students to obtain a certificate testifying to special competence in World Trade Organization studies.

Georgetown also allows you, with advance approval, to take up to six credits in one of the other Georgetown graduate programs. So, if you are interested in getting some background in another discipline—e.g., public policy or foreign policy—you can seek approval to take courses at the Georgetown Public Policy Institute, School of Foreign Service, or other Georgetown program. In addition, under our concurrent degree policy, the Law Center accepts up to six credits from a graduate program at another institution.

Take courses that will hone specific practice skills such as litigation, research and writing, and legislative advocacy.

While all legal employers value good research, writing, and oral advocacy skills, public interest employers place a premium on them. Thus, in addition to subject matter-based doctrinal and experiential learning courses, you should consider taking one or more general skills courses, such as Trial Practice, Advanced Legal Writing in Practice, Appellate Practice Seminar, and a course in the alternative dispute resolution area, such as Mediation. If you really enjoy writing, you might also consider applying to be a Law Fellow, through which you can hone your own writing skills while teaching in the first-year Legal Research and Writing course. In addition, some seminars in the Public Interest cluster stress problem solving approaches to legal problems, a critical skill for public interest lawyers.

4. Consult with the Academic Curriculum Guide and OPICS’ practice area page for more information on subject matter course clusters.

The Academic Curriculum Guide provides information about courses and professors relevant to a variety of legal topics, including Criminal Law and Procedure, Environmental Law, and Public Interest Law. See <http://www.law.georgetown.edu/academic/>. The OPICS practice areas pages similarly focus on different legal topics, and highlight significant employers, job search resources, and student groups related to each practice area. See <http://www.law.georgetown.edu/opics/PracticeAreas.html>.

OTHER ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE YOUR PUBLIC INTEREST GOALS

1. Journals

Georgetown is home to 10 law journals, which are student-run scholarly legal publications and a mainstay of most law school campuses. The traditional path to journal membership at Georgetown is through the Write-On Competition that takes place annually at the end of first year. Many students get the explicit or implicit message that participation on a journal is a *must* if they are to be competitive in the legal job market. Not necessarily so! Journals are one of many paths for gaining subject matter knowledge and/or developing relevant skills, and students who did not join a journal have received positions with all types of legal employers. Some employers—most notably law firms and federal judges--do tend to place significant emphasis on journal membership, but many others do not. In the public interest legal market, many employers place as much or more emphasis on clinical training, internships, and skills-based courses. Moreover, while some students very much enjoy being on a journal, others do not. You should seriously weigh your reasons for wanting to participate in a journal before you decide to participate in the write-on competition. Often, journals are particularly attractive to students who want to engage in scholarship or other academic pursuits.

Georgetown has many excellent journals, and public interest students will find that a number of them focus primarily or exclusively on issues affecting the underrepresented. The 10 journals are American Criminal Law Review, Georgetown Immigration Law Journal, Georgetown International Environmental Law Review, The Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law, Georgetown Journal of International Law, Georgetown Journal of Law and Public Policy, Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics, Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy, Georgetown Law Journal, and The Tax Lawyer.

INSTITUTES

Georgetown University offers many specialized Institutes and Centers engaged in research and scholarly work, and they are excellent places to look for Research Assistant positions, as well as many other curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. Below is a

list of a few of the Institutes and Centers have been of particular interest to public interest students. Check each Institute's website for useful links.

Institute for Study of International Migration (ISIM)

ISIM is housed on the main Georgetown campus in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, but it maintains a strong relationship with the Law Center. ISIM focuses on an interdisciplinary approach to research and scholarship concerning international migration, with particular focuses on U.S. immigration, international immigration policies (especially various multilateral approaches to regional immigration/migration phenomena), and issues of forced migration and refugees. ISIM hosts many symposia and conferences, supports research, houses a Visiting Scholars program, and produces the journal *International Migration*—a leading peer-reviewed publication. Director Andrew Schoenholtz is a visiting professor at the Law Center and oversees the Certificate in Refugees and Humanitarian Emergencies.

Human Rights Institute

The Human Rights Institute (HRI) is housed at the Law Center. It supports both research and advocacy in human rights, and sponsors many events aimed at facilitating exchanges on information between scholars, practitioners, and government decision-makers. The Institute also administers the Kroll Fellowships in Human Rights (open only to Georgetown students!), and maintains an excellent website of human rights links.

The Centers for Law and the Public's Health

The Centers, collaboration between Johns Hopkins University and Georgetown University, serve as a resource on public health law, sponsor research, and promote the development of a more effective public health law infrastructure. The Centers also actively collaborate with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Georgetown Law Professor Lawrence Gostin is a Director of the Centers.

JOINT-DEGREE PROGRAMS

Through Georgetown's joint degree program, students can combine their legal training with another discipline, allowing them complete both degrees in a shorter amount of time than if they pursued the degrees sequentially. Joint degrees may expose students to additional opportunities or open up other career choices beyond those for which a Juris Doctor is the preferred graduate degree. Law students contemplating a joint degree should consult with academic and/or career advisors *of both programs* before making a final decision. While these degrees can be very beneficial to some students, they do not typically add value to a JD for students interested in traditional legal practice. Exploring possible career options with counselors from both programs is a critical step to ensure that you make the right investment for your professional objectives.

Georgetown University currently offers twelve joint degree programs to law students:

Public Policy Institute

JD/MPP

School of Business

JD/MBA

Department of Philosophy

JD/Philosophy

Department of Government

JD/Government

Law Center

JD/LL.M in Taxation

School of Foreign Service

JD/MSFS

JD/MAAS

JD/MAREES

JD/MAGES

JD/MALAS

JD/MASSP

Johns Hopkins University-Baltimore

School of Hygiene and Public Health

JD/MPH

In general, students can apply to the joint degree program when they initially apply for the law school or they can apply for a second degree while in their first year of law school. You can obtain more information about joint degrees from the Office of JD Academic Services, which administers the programs.

BAR EXAMS

For public interest students, deciding what bar exam to take and whether to take a bar review course can be particularly challenging. This is true for two major reasons: 1) the entry-level public interest job market is generally on a later time cycle than the private sector market; and 2) most non-profit and government employers will not reimburse students for their bar review course expenses. Early and thoughtful consideration of which bar review course and which bar exam to take is therefore very important. In particular, you can decrease your bar review course costs *considerably* by registering early (some let you register as early as first-year), exploring discounts and scholarships for public interest students, or becoming a campus representative for a course. Also, when you know which state bar exam you will be taking, you should research all bar review courses offered for that bar because the prices can vary widely.