

Morehead State University

Pre-Law at MSU

Fifth Edition

Societas Pro Legibus

Preface

Pre-Law at MSU provides an overview of the MSU pre-law program: the law-related skills you need to acquire, how to choose a pre-law major, when to take the Law School Admissions Test and apply to law school, and why you should join MSU's pre-law society.

If you wish to become a member of MSU's pre-law society, complete the Societas Pro Legibus Membership Application Form. Mail the forms or give them to Professor William Green, Faculty Advisor, Societas Pro Legibus, 316 Rader Hall. Morehead State University, Morehead, KY 40351.

Pre-Law at MSU was written by Professor William Green, published by Societas Pro Legibus, printed by the Department of Geography, Government, and History, and available at <http://www.morehead-st.edu/ggh/index.aspx?id=24640> .

William Green
Morehead State University
April 4, 2008

Preparing for Law School

Lawyers work with clients from all segments of society involving a wide array of personal, social, and business problems. Lawyers deal with major courtroom cases and minor traffic disputes, complex corporate mergers and straightforward real estate transactions. Lawyers represent the impoverished and the wealthy, the helpless and the powerful. Lawyers work as sole practitioners and as members of law firms. They also work for small businesses, multinational corporations, public interest groups, government agencies, and international organizations.

The Morehead State University pre-law program will prepare you for a legal career by allowing you to choose any academic discipline to develop the skills you will need to study law. Some universities provide their students with a pre-law program with prescribed courses, but they are clearly the exception.

MSU adopts the view, endorsed by American law schools, that there should be no fixed pre-law curriculum, because legal education is not a graduate program of advanced work in a specialized academic discipline that builds upon basic knowledge and techniques acquired in an undergraduate program.

Acquiring the Necessary Skills

Legal education is professional education which requires you to develop three basic skills prior to law school, skills needed by all lawyers.

First, acquire a thorough knowledge of language, including grammar and syntax, a good vocabulary, an ability to read rapidly with insight and understanding, and a facility for expressing ideas with clarity and order, because the basic working tools of lawyers are written and spoken words.

Second, pursue a major in which you will learn to think clearly, form sound study habits, and master the knowledge and methods of a particular academic discipline, because the basic skills of lawyers include the careful ordering of facts and events, conceptual analysis and synthesis, and effective advocacy.

Third, obtain a comprehensive undergraduate education which includes a good knowledge of history, government and political processes, social and cultural patterns, and the ethical and spiritual credos by which people live, because lawyers work in a variety of social, economic, and political communities.

Choosing a Pre-Law Major

You may develop these skills prior to law school by majoring in an academic discipline of your choice. A pre-legal education contains no requirements or restrictions. There is no major that law school admissions officers will frown upon. You can major in any field from Anthropology to Zoology and then be admitted to a fine law school and become an outstanding lawyer. But the major you choose must be a rigorous program which maximizes your opportunity to develop the three basic skills prior to law school. It is not so much a matter of what you study, as it is selecting the courses that interest you, challenge you, and require you to develop your ability to write coherently, speak articulately, and argue persuasively.

Your decision about a major should be based on your personal interests and needs. You must choose your major because you believe that you will enjoy and academically excel at the study of its subject matter. Why? Your undergraduate education and the major you choose should stand on their own merits as basic preparation for life in a diverse and changing society. Your choice of a major is also important, because one of the two principal criteria for admission to law school is your grade point average. With these general observations in mind, there are two approaches you may use to select a major.

First, you may select a major from a discipline in which law schools recommend that students take coursework during their undergraduate studies. These disciplines include English, political science/government, English, history, and business. If you select a Government major, you should consider taking courses, such as constitutional law and civil liberties, which will introduce you to the reading, writing, and argumentation skills and the method of study you will use in law school.

Second, you may select a major to prepare you for an occupation other than the law. This approach will allow you to study for two careers at the same time and give you a greater choice of careers upon graduation. If you go to law school, this dual career approach will allow you to choose a law school which emphasizes your undergraduate major (e.g., environmental studies) or pursue a master's degree program (e.g. business administration or public administration) jointly with your law degree. The dual career approach will also allow you to pursue a career based on your major (e.g., accounting or English) and enter law school later.

Taking the LSAT and Applying to Law School

You do not need to think about taking the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and applying to law school until your junior year. In the meantime, you should study hard, consult with your pre-law advisor and join the MSU pre-law society. Your preparation for taking the LSAT and attending law school will begin with the second semester of your junior year and will involve two law school-related activities.

In the Spring semester of your junior year, you will attend a meeting that will outline the LSAT preparation and law school application process. The meeting will focus on LSAT self-study and commercial study approaches and the need to take the LSAT offered in June following your junior year. In the Fall semester of your senior year, you will attend a meeting about the law school application process. Thereafter, you will meet with your pre-law advisor to discuss your law school applications, personal statement, and recommendations.

Participating in Societas Pro Legibus

You should join and participate in Societas Pro Legibus (SPL), MSU's pre-law society. SPL is involved in a variety of law school-related activities including the sponsorship of mock Law School Admission Tests, and LSAT preparation and law school application meetings.

Societas Pro Legibus hosts visits by law school admissions officers from the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, and Northern Kentucky University. SPL members attend the UK, NKU Chase, and UofL open houses. UK and UofL also host open houses for minorities.

To become a Societas Pro Legibus member complete the application form in this pre-law guide, write a check to Societas Pro Legibus for the one-time \$15 membership fee, and return it, along with the application form to Professor William Green, Societas Pro Legibus Faculty Advisor, 316 Rader Hall, Morehead State University, Morehead, KY 40351.

Working With Your Pre-Law Advisor

At MSU ask a pre-law advisor to counsel you in your selection of courses and program of study. Your pre-law advisor can also assist you as you prepare to take the LSAT and as you apply for admission to law school. The following MSU faculty are the Law School Admission Council's pre-law advisors.

Professor William Green, J. D., Ph.D.
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316 Rader Hall, 783-2128
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Professor Dianna Murphy, J.D.
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Professor Steve Herzog, J.D.
319 Rader Hall, 783-2219
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Obtaining Pre-Law Program Information

You may also address general inquiries about the pre-law program to

Department of Geography, Government, and History
350 Rader Hall
Morehead State University
Morehead, KY 40351
(606)783-2655

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equal opportunity educational institution.

Morehead State University

Societas Pro Legibus

Pre-Law Society

Membership Application Form

Name _____
First Middle Last

Student Number _____ Birth date _____

MSU Email Address _____

Personal Email Address _____

Current Address _____

Street Apt. No.

City State ZIP

Local Phone _____

Class Rank _____ (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior)

Major _____ Second Major _____

Minor _____ Second Minor _____

Academic Advisor _____

Anticipated Date of Graduation _____
Month Year

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