

Law Teaching

Is This the Right Job for You?

It is helpful to try to use your law school years to appraise whether being a law professor seems like a fit for you, since you are unlikely to ever have such an easy opportunity to explore the field again. Students see their professors as they teach in class and therefore may reach the incorrect conclusion that this is what the job is about. In fact, classroom teaching is a small part of the job of being a law professor. Especially in the early years, enormous portions of a professor's day are spent preparing for class through planning, researching, and reading. However the central activity in an academic's life is the research and writing necessary for publishing. If you don't enjoy spending significant periods of time researching and writing, you will not enjoy being a law professor.

In the past, clinical professors were not held to the same research and writing standards as classroom professors, but this is changing. It is still safe to say that clinical professors will probably spend much more time working with students, collaborating with peers, and, in real contrast to their classroom colleagues, handling clients.

To decide if the teaching life is for you, consider becoming a research assistant to one of your professors during law school, and perhaps also a teaching assistant. You will never have a better opportunity to observe and get to know the kinds of folks you want to work with someday: law professors. In addition, you should take opportunities to develop your own research and writing skills and consider trying to publish your work. These activities will allow you to truly get the feel for the job tasks.

What Do You Need To Do?

Typically, the three most important factors in hiring decisions are publications, strong faculty recommendations, and well-demonstrated academic and scholarly interests. Clerkship and law journal experiences are pluses, but generally not as much as they were in the past. As for journal experience, most appointments committees don't value membership or editorial positions as much as they value actual publication while on the journal. Equally important, the lack of journal or clerkship experience is not viewed as a negative. It just reinforces the importance of the rest of the package (publications, strong references, etc.).

Law school is a great time to find what legal areas interest you and to see how much you enjoy legal research and writing. You will never have a better time to produce publishable work—all the resources of the law school are at your disposal. You have engaging colleagues with whom to test ideas, and you have a relatively high degree of control over your time. You need not target specific classes, but consider opportunities that will permit you to hone your analytical and writing skills. Even in larger classes, you can be alert for intriguing questions that might be worth investigating, and you can look for chances to explore your ideas with the professor, in or out of class. An array of progressively more responsible clinical experiences in law school is helpful to those who want to pursue clinical teaching, but even limited clinical experience can be offset with relevant practice experience.

Good YLS faculty references will be a big plus if you decide to enter law teaching. Use your time at the law school to develop a relationship with a few professors. This can be done in a number of ways, whether working with them in a clinic or on a pro bono project, writing with them in a seminar or directed research, or acting as a research or teaching assistant.

Having said all that, it's worth remembering that you need not decide during your first semester of law school that you are going to be a law professor and devote every waking moment to that end. Many YLS graduates do not decide to pursue teaching opportunities until after they leave. Sometimes it takes awhile for interests to gel. It might take a little more effort, but it's certainly feasible to produce publishable work and make or renew connections with professors after you are working.

Finally, teaching candidates typically have a few years of experience that adds depth to their research agenda and credibility to their subject area interests. The experience may be with firms, clerkships, government agencies, nonprofits, or a combination thereof. In rare cases, this experience is replaced with another academic degree that relates to the legal teaching interest.

What Will YLS Do To Help?

Counseling. During your time at Yale you should take advantage of the resources in the building. The faculty Law Teaching Committee can talk with students interested in legal academia. In addition, CDO conducts several programs every year for students on legal teaching careers and publishes a career guide, *Entering the Law Teaching Market*, which describes in more detail the career, hiring process, and resources in this field. The guide is available in CDO and on our website at <http://www.law.yale.edu/cdo> under *Resources*, then *CDO Publications*.

Educational Programs. The Law Teaching Series, organized by Associate Dean Megan Barnett, provides JD students, graduate students and post-graduate fellows with training and information about careers in academia. During the academic year, the Law Teaching Series will alternate information sessions with student workshops. These workshops give student authors a chance to present their work to the Law School community, with commentary by professors. A "Moot Camp" is available to alumni who are in the law teaching market to help them moot their job talk and otherwise prepare for the teaching market.

Fellowships. The Law School offers two fellowships for post-graduate research: the Irving S. Ribicoff Fellowship and Oscar M. Ruebhausen Fellowships. Both one-year fellowships seek to prepare individuals with law degrees for teaching careers in law. The fellowships currently pay \$44,000. For more information on these and other fellowships, see <http://www.law.yale.edu> under *Alumni, YLS Employment and Fellowship Opportunities*.

Publishing Assistance. The YLS Library assists students in publishing their work in law reviews by providing the ExpressO manuscript delivery service to all students under the law school account with its provider, BePress. By uploading your article to ExpressO, the article can be delivered to hundreds of law reviews at no cost to you. Contact Fred Shapiro (fred.shapiro@yale.edu) for more complete information on this service.

The AALS Faculty Recruitment Process. When you are ready to enter the teaching market, YLS will review your CV (the academic resume); include it in the YLS book of CVs sent to all AALS approved law schools; provide counseling; and assist you at the AALS hiring conference through our hospitality suite and appointments committees' reception.

Professors. Remember that YLS professors are ready to serve as references, and many become actively engaged in the process. Let them know about your academic career goals and progress.

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