

# PRE-LAW

## Pathway Information

You should prepare for a career in law by building credentials in scholarship, leadership, humanitarian/community service, and by gaining some legal-related work experience. By far the most common undergraduate major of successful applicants to law school is political science. However, there is no “best” major for pre-law students. Pursue a major you are genuinely interested in so that you will excel academically. Remember to consult the Coordinator of Pre-Law Services about your individual plan.

### RECOMMENDED COURSES

#### Courses to consider:

- Political Science (POLS) 2201, 3205, 4100, 4460, 4570, 4580, 4700, 4760, 4920, 4930
- English (ENGL) 2200, 3220, 3240, 3270, 4050, 4310
- Sociology (SOCL) 3325, 3350, 3800, 4350, 4460, 4492
- Psychology (PSYC) 3311, 3850, 4492

#### Minors to consider:

- Political Science
- English (Professional Writing)
- Sociology
- Psychology
- Marketing
- Management
- Accounting
- Human Resource Management

#### Certificates to consider:

- Criminal Justice
- Social Justice

### ADVISOR INFORMATION

All prospective GSW students, current GSW students, and GSW alumni should contact the Pre-Law Advisor for more information.

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### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### What is a JD?

A JD is a degree that will prepare you to pass a state bar exam. Most jobs in the legal field are bar-passage required positions. If you want to be a lawyer or judge, you will need to pass the bar. JD programs are three years long.

#### Components of a J.D. Application

- GPA (transcripts)
- LSAT (or GRE in some cases)
- Personal Statement
- 2-4 Letters of Recommendation
- Resume/CV

Law schools want to see evidence of certain skills in an application. Use your coursework, extracurricular activities, and work opportunities to develop the following skills.

- Problem solving
- Critical reading
- Writing and editing
- Oral communication and listening
- Research
- Organization and management
- Public service and promotion of justice
- Relationship-building
- Background Knowledge
- Exposure to law

### GPA EXPECTATIONS

Law schools look for evidence of sustained academic success when evaluating an application. They want to admit applicants who are committed and prepared for the academic rigor of law school. Do not give up if you have one poor semester. Law schools will observe the trends in your academic performance, and appreciate any continuous improvement. However, they will also notice negative trends and multiple course withdrawals. While an instance or two is not a deal-breaker, a pattern of behavior should be avoided. You must demonstrate the ability to handle difficult courses. Law schools will primarily take in to account the GPA for your first undergraduate degree earned (UGPA). Although, law schools will have access to transcripts for graduate work.

DISCLAIMER: There are NO required courses for pre-law. You might also find courses not listed above which will develop your skills for law school or give you some exposure to the law.

### LAW SCHOOL ADMISSION TEST (LSAT)

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is required for admission into most law schools and is usually offered eight to ten times per year at a cost of \$200. You should plan to take the LSAT only once. The standard LSAT consists of four sections designed to assess your reading comprehension, analytical reasoning, and logical reasoning skills. You will have 35 minutes to complete each section. Registration for each LSAT test administration closes six weeks in advance. Make sure to register early! In order to receive your score for the LSAT, you must complete the written LSAT.

To prepare for the LSAT you should plan to devote 6-9 months for preparation. Taking the LSAT can be a learned skill that combines with the skills being directly tested. The best way to prepare is taking practice tests. The Law School Admissions Council offers free resources at LSAC.org for preparing for the LSAT and applying to law schools. Practice tests are also available for purchase. Contact the Coordinator of Pre-Law Services about other resources.

### CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT, VOLUNTEERING & RESEARCH

Your resume should reflect your values, skills, and preparedness for law school.

**Extracurriculars/Volunteering:** Evidence of leadership is critical to a successful law school application. Join a campus club or volunteer with a community organization that interests you. Do not over-extend yourself. Demonstrating continuous involvement with increasing responsibility is preferable to the quantity of activities. Your extracurriculars do not have to be related to the law. Law schools want to see that you care about your campus or local community.

**Work Experience and Internships:** Try to find a position or internship that relates to the legal field. This will give you exposure to the law, and help you to decide if the career path is a good fit for you. Consider shadowing a lawyer. Shadowing allows you to observe the day-to-day activities of an attorney or legal professional to better understand the complexities of legal professions. Contact the Coordinator of Pre-Law Services or the Office of Experiential Learning for information and help with either informal internships or internships for GSW course credit. Finally, you must invest time in honing your research and writing skills. Look for Research Assistant positions that will introduce you to professional-level research. You don't need to find a research position in the legal field. Show that you can master a subject's technical language and citation format.

### LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

You will need at least two Letters of Recommendation (LOR) to apply to law school. Some law schools will allow you to submit up to four. Make sure to develop a relationship with professors. It's preferable that you submit LORs from those that can attest to your academic success. If you have been out of school several years, a LOR from an employer is acceptable. Law schools do not care about the prestige of the LOR writer. Do not ask a politician or dignitary who has no specific knowledge of your academic abilities.

### ACADEMIC HONESTY & PERSONAL CONDUCT

To be admitted into a state's bar you will have to pass a moral character and fitness review. Law schools want to fill seats with students who will be accepted into the bar. Any lapse in judgment can impact your chances at getting into law school or being certified to practice law. You will have to disclose any felonies, misdemeanors, personal misconduct, or violations of GSW's Academic Integrity Policy. Do not under any circumstances plagiarize the work of others.

### TIMELINE

#### Freshman and Sophomore Years

Build credentials for law school: shadow, volunteer, do research, build relationships with faculty, etc.  
Do **not** wait until junior year to begin!  
Attend the GSW Law Fair to meet with recruiters

#### Junior Year

Fall	Continue shadowing, doing research, volunteering, etc.
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Jan. - May	Study for the LSAT.
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#### Summer

Jun. - Aug.	Take the LSAT (Make sure to register at least six weeks in advance).
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Late July	Request Letters of Recommendation.
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Jul. - Aug.	Send all academic transcripts to LSAC. Start drafting your personal statement and optional essays.
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#### Senior Year

Sep. 1	Most law school applications open Decide if you will apply Early Decision
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Sep. - Nov.	Complete application requirements and pay for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS).
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Oct.	Fill out FAFSA application to ensure that you are prepared to apply for financial aid.
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Dec. 1	Plan to have your applications completed and submitted.
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Feb. - Jun.	Law school application window closes (check each law school for precise deadlines).
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