The Curriculum

University of Michigan Law School

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Citation
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From the Dean

Michigan Law:
150 Years of Educating and Training the Complete Lawyer

The Curriculum

The 1L Year

Upper-level Coursework
Seminars & mini-seminars; workshops
Clinics & practice simulations

Thinking outside the Quad
Dual degrees and courses in other departments
Externships and internships
Study abroad

Curricular Specialties
International Law
Constitutional Law
Intellectual Property Law
Environmental Law
Public Interest Law
Business, Securities, and Transactional Law

Toward a full and rewarding life in the law
The Curriculum

From the Dean 2

Michigan Law: 5
150 Years of Educating and Training the Complete Lawyer

The Curriculum 7

The 1L Year 9

Upper-level Coursework 10
Seminars & mini-seminars; workshops
Clinics & practice simulations

Thinking outside the Quad 13
Dual degrees and courses in other departments
Externships and internships
Study abroad

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Constitutional Law
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Environmental Law
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From the Dean

Alumni constantly tell me that the greatest value of their Michigan Law education was the foundation it provided: the broad-ranging skills, temperament, and confidence to pursue any professional path at any time. The key was Michigan Law's impartation of enduring learning habits and skills, renewable and transferable throughout their lifetime.

As we have prepared students for 150 years, we will prepare you for the wide range of career opportunities you'll explore after graduation, as well as for the reality that your interests and professional opportunities will almost assuredly change and expand over time. Moreover, we strive to ensure that you will enjoy yourself along the way. We do not provide artificially constraining preset curricular paths; rather, we will encourage and guide you to develop and follow your own interests, enabling specialization while encouraging exploration and experimentation. You will develop the capacity and confidence to teach yourself new areas of law, new sets of lawyering skills, and the ability to operate in new legal or other professional settings, even years after you leave our classrooms and clinics. This pedagogic attitude and approach is a truly distinctive aspect of the Michigan Difference.

Evan Caminker
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Law school is often imagined as a place where intimidating, aloof professors use fear and humiliation to foster the rote memorization of black letter law. In that dismal model, students learn precedents and statutes in an austere, detached environment devoid of any practical application of the concepts. And while there may be learning, there by definition cannot be a sense of community or purpose or imagination. The University of Michigan Law School, in contrast, has long been an engaging, dynamic community of scholars, leaders, and public servants who are all intensely committed to balancing the theoretical, ethical, and practical approaches to studying law.

The “law” isn’t a fixed set of isolated principles but a living and continuously evolving array of perspectives through which human behavior is examined, norms are codified, and conflicts are ultimately adjudicated. At the core, a complete legal education requires that students are imbued with both substantive knowledge of the history, principles, structures, and evolution of the law, as well as its conceptual and practical applications. At Michigan Law School, we train students to be technically proficient at particular lawyering exercises as well as to develop exceptional judgment, adaptability, and creativity. They gain both the analytical and interpersonal skills essential to professional and personal success.
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The Curriculum

From the initial first-year courses onward, students are challenged to be broad and critical thinkers. Upper-level courses further refine these skills as well as offer outlets for their practical application. The result is a curriculum that, while rigorous, provides lawyerly skills, a grasp of the law in both its theoretical and practical manifestations, the broad interdisciplinary context in which to best understand and interpret the law, and the ethical and moral perspectives through which informed leaders are expected to make decisions. This helps explain why Michigan Law graduates are highly valued in the marketplace, meriting a reputation as leaders and innovators in and beyond the legal profession. To impart this training, our curriculum bears three distinctive hallmarks: interdisciplinarity, internationalism, and interaction.

Interdisciplinarity While commitment to pushing the traditional boundaries of disciplines characterizes the University of Michigan as a whole, the field of law is particularly fertile ground for interdisciplinary work. Exposure to alternative perspectives helps develop a critical and creative eye for problem-solving, and prepares students for a world in which most legal issues are best understood through the lens of other academic disciplines. The law extends its reach into all aspects of society, addressing questions of human relations, fairness, and justice. Legal understandings must recognize the complexity of human behavior, and therefore require us to examine evidence and events from many angles, and be open to the possibility that multiple plausible answers may emerge. Four decades ago, Michigan Law was at the forefront of the now widely endorsed interdisciplinary approach to the law, integrating humanities and social sciences into the curriculum. And in contrast to other law schools, we employ what might be called a Noah’s Ark ethic, with many different styles of academic work represented and none enjoying a position of dominance. Rather than urging our students to narrow themselves to a single scholarly approach, we encourage them to grapple with many views.
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I had the opportunity to study law and economics at Harvard, and chose Michigan instead. I have never regretted my decision. The Michigan quadrangle is a wonderful scholarly community dedicated to the study of law and legal problems. Although distinct from the rest of the University, the Law School's faculty and students have ready access to first-rate scholars in any discipline at what is one of the world's premier research universities. The environment for research and study in the quadrangle is also unsurpassed. I fondly remember my years studying among its graceful arches, stained glass windows and cork floor reading room, as well as playing frisbee on the commons.

Kenneth G. Dau-Schmidt, J.D. ’81/Ph.D. ’84
Associate Dean of Faculty Research and Willard and Margaret Carr Professor of Labor and Employment Law
Indiana University School of Law

Internationalism Throughout its history, Michigan Law has brought a global perspective to the study of law and legal institutions. Indeed, the 1837 statute establishing the University specifically provided that the "law department" include a professor of international law, a rarity at the time. Unlike most law schools with dominance in international law, Michigan Law offers more than a bounty of international and comparative law courses; our focus on global issues and perspectives imbues the entire curriculum. Within the traditional doctrinal approach to the study of law, there is ample room to educate students on the international and transnational implications of even the most domestic of subjects. At Michigan, as throughout today's world, the boundaries between "domestic" and "international" have lost much of their distinctiveness, and thus in our curriculum the two are intertwined. Courses at other law schools exploring environmental, intellectual property, or antitrust law might ignore the essential transnational components of these fields—but not so at Michigan.

Interaction At Michigan, we expect our students to interact both with the world and with each other. We enable you to pursue the former goal by offering a variety of curricular offerings designed to take you out of the Law Quad and into contact with those who will be your clients: from clinics and other action-based learning courses to study-abroad and externship opportunities. But we equally foster your engagement with your colleagues within the Law Quad. We believe that as you consider the quality of education a law school provides, you must consider its environment, and how conducive it is to learning and growing. In the broad sense, your education are predictive of long-term success and, frankly, professional happiness. Enjoying your time at law school and developing a positive relationship with classmates and professors will have an intangible but meaningful impact on what and how you learn. Our success in producing graduates who are professionally satisfied emanates from our success in creating an academic environment that is simultaneously challenging and comfortable. At Michigan, you will learn and expand your network in surroundings dedicated to producing not just outstanding lawyers, but also happy lawyers.

The 1L Year

As is common among law schools, a significant portion of the first-year curriculum at Michigan is preset, in order to ensure a basic understanding of the profession's principles and methods, develop a common vocabulary and cognitive paradigm, and no less importantly, foster a common bond among the students. In the first year, your section of about 90 students will explore together four or five of the six core doctrinal courses (Civil Procedure, Contracts, Criminal Law, Constitutional Law, Property, and Torts). The remaining one or two courses will be taught in a smaller section of 45. While this regimen is fairly standard across most law schools, at Michigan you will be taught by faculty who write the leading textbooks, draft major law review articles, and argue cases before the Supreme Court. In fact, of this year's 29 first-year class sections, 22 were taught by full tenured professors; the remainder were taught by tenure-track or long-term clinical faculty, with only one being taught by a visiting professor.

Beyond doctrine, one critical feature of our 1L curriculum is its intensive focus on objective and persuasive writing and other key practice skills: legal research, oral advocacy, negotiation, and professional norms. For more than a decade, Michigan's groundbreaking Legal Practice Program has taught each first-year student the fundamentals of legal research and analysis, persuasive legal writing, and oral advocacy. Class sizes are small—fewer than 25 students—assuring each person individual attention. Just as importantly, our full-time Legal Practice professors were all top practitioners, with an average of nine years of real-world experience, prior to becoming faculty—not recent graduates or current students, as is commonly found at other schools. Their considerable practical experience—in arguing cases before judges and juries; writing briefs and memoranda; negotiating with other attorneys—brings immense value to the learning experience while ensuring that students acquire the professional skills employers are seeking.
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Upper-level coursework

The elective courses available principally in the second and third years at the Law School vary in conceptual approach, from deep theory about the law and legal institutions to focused and pragmatic inquiries into how the practice of law works in specific fields and contexts. The options range from graduate-style work delving deep into a particular subject to hands-on forays into courtroom and transactional work.

Seminars & mini-seminars; workshops

Typically limited to groups of 15 or fewer, seminars promote an even closer and more collegial relationship among students and faculty and encourage more sustained exploration of complex topics. Further, most seminars involve writing an extended work of scholarship developed over the course of the semester with input from the professor and classmates. The variety of options in any given semester is exhilarating, allowing in-depth study of traditional subjects while developing a new interest in an emerging field. And none of this precludes the occasional idiosyncratic detour. Thus, a student interested in criminal law would find White Collar Crime, Habeas Corpus, Federal Sentencing, Selected Problems in Policing, or Drug Policy to be worthy choices, while future litigators would want to consider Supreme Court Litigation, Expert Evidence, Complex Litigation, or Shareholder Litigation. Many will be intrigued by Symbolic Logic and Law, the Law of Armed Conflict, or the Evolution of Contracts in a Digital Era; still others will find their legal education incomplete without a course like Eye for an Eye or Faking It.

In contrast to regular seminars, our mini-seminars take a survey approach to a variety of topics, typically in an informal setting such as a professor's home. Almost like a prolonged conversation between a small group of students and a faculty member, the mini-seminars are designed to foster a close connection among the participants. About 15 such seminars are offered a year, with an enrollment of 10 to 12 students. Topics can be intensely law-focused, as in International Law and the Israel-Arab/Palestinian Conflicts or the New Supreme Court, or may deviate from the more standard coursework, as in Baseball as Metaphor for Law, or Law in Popular Literature.

Clinics & practice simulations

Michigan Law's clinical programs are recognized as among the very best in the country. One reason is that under this state's court rules—more flexible than the vast majority—students may begin practicing law as early as their 2L year and receive course credit for the experience. Under the close supervision of clinical faculty, students prepare for each aspect of their cases, from interviewing clients and witnesses to negotiating with opposing counsel, drafting pleadings, and conducting trials. Ultimately, students assume full responsibility for providing legal services. Because our clinic cases are scheduled on less-congested court dockets, you would typically handle your own cases from start to finish. Choosing among several significantly different clinical programs, you might successfully convince a court to reduce a sentence, secure funding to build low-income housing, or win medical coverage for a sick child. You can gain hands-on experience helping clients who would not otherwise have access to high-quality legal representation and be a catalyst for transformational changes in their lives.

Practice simulations are a second-level bridge between doctrinal and action-based learning, expanding the areas of law that can be effectively addressed within the constraints of a single semester. Thus, in Advanced Appellate Advocacy you can intensively examine the practical and theoretical underpinnings of appellate practice—record development, doctrinal analysis for purposes of argument and defense, litigation theory creation, brief writing and amicus strategies, and oral advocacy—by focusing on one actual case. For another example, Advanced Copyright Practice uses six real-world cases to give students the opportunity to integrate substantive copyright knowledge in negotiating and drafting documents integral to copyright law. It touches upon the spectrum of copyright law, including classic literary and pictorial works, entertainment, technology, and globalization.
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Thinking outside the Quad

Dual degrees and courses in other departments

One of the many benefits of choosing a world-class university like Michigan is the stellar quality of its other graduate programs. Integral to the School’s expansive and inclusive legal perspective, Michigan’s pioneering dual-degree programs allow you to combine your study of law with another field, fostering a broader and deeper understanding of the context of the law’s construction and application. Examining the historical, sociological, economic, and domestic and international political ramifications of laws inevitably makes you a more sophisticated and nuanced scholar.

At any given time, almost 100 Michigan Law students are pursuing one of the 14 formal dual degrees the Law School offers. The most popular is the MBA, sought by more than a fifth of our dual-degree students; other very popular programs are Public Policy, Public Health, Natural Resources, and Urban Planning. The Law School is also supportive of students who wish to design their own dual-degree program; recent examples include computer science, engineering, kinesiology, sociology, and American culture.

Of course, not all students who have an interest in other curricular areas decide to invest the considerable time and money required to attain two degrees. For them, the option of counting up to 12 graduate course credits from other University departments toward the JD is invaluable. Almost 200 students in the last two years have pursued this option, augmenting their law school coursework with selections like Business in Asia, Real Estate Development, Legal Aspects of Sports, Elections and Campaigns, Housing Policy and Economics, Bargaining and Influence Skills, Managing a Nonprofit Organization, Capital Markets and Investment Strategy, foreign language study, or for something completely different, Metaphysics.

Law and Business Administration (JD/MBA)
Law and Economics (JD/PhD)
Law and Chinese Studies (JD/MA)
Law and Information (JD/MSI)
Law and Japanese Studies (JD/MA)
Law and Modern Middle Eastern & North African Studies (JD/MA)
Law and Natural Resources (JD/MS)
Law and Public Health (JD/MHSA or MPH)
Law and Public Policy (JD/MPP)
Law and Russian & East European Studies (JD/MA)
Law and Social Work (JD/MSW)
Law and Urban & Regional Planning (JD/MUP)
Law and World Politics (JD/MA)
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There's no question that the practice of law is global, and that it is common for legal problems to be cross-border in nature. It is important for law students to learn how the U.S. legal system intersects with foreign legal systems and with international legal regimes. Michigan classes offer students a global perspective on the law as well as a solid grounding in U.S. law and legal reasoning. Students can deepen this perspective through Michigan's internationally oriented externships and semester study abroad opportunities. The presence of foreign students enrolled in our J.D. and LL.M. programs, plus the relationships and direct engagement of a distinguished alumni body working internationally, further enriches the international and transnational perspective of our students and leads to a richer understanding of the global practice of law.

Virginia B. Gordan
Assistant Dean for International Affairs
University of Michigan Law School

**Externships and internships** Michigan’s programs are designed to provide individual students with advanced training and research opportunities in their particular areas of interest, going beyond what is traditionally offered in the classroom and allowing those with very focused goals to immerse themselves full-time in a specific area of the law. Students combine legal studies with skills training, resulting in an intensive understanding of a particular legal field. Students individually design programs of study that directly benefit their personal educational goals. Recent externships range from the Habeas Corpus Research Center in San Francisco to the Pharmaceutical Research Manufacturers Association in Washington, D.C., to the U.S. State Department.

In addition to these individually arranged externships, the Law School has organized the following options:

- **Geneva.** January 2008 marked the launch of a semester-long externship opportunity with leading intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in Geneva, Switzerland. Students with an interest in international affairs can explore how international legal regimes intersect with such diverse fields as trade, human rights, labor, telecommunications, and health. Cooperating organizations include the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the International Service for Human Rights, the World Health Organization, and the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development.

- **South Africa.** Each fall for more than a decade, up to one dozen students participate in the Law School’s South Africa Externship Program. Placements are made in both government agencies and non-governmental organizations, including the Legal Resource Centers in Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg; in law clinics headquartered at various law schools in South Africa; and in human rights organizations.
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- **Cambodia.** The Program for Cambodian Law and Development provides an academic forum for the interdisciplinary study of Cambodian legal institutions and the role of law in the development process, offering summer internships in Cambodia at such organizations as the UN Human Rights Center in Phnom Penh, Legal Aid of Cambodia, Cambodian Defenders Project, Cambodian Association for Human Rights, Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center, and the Ministry of Commerce.

**Study abroad** For students whose academic or career interests make appropriate a more thorough understanding of another nation’s laws, or who want to learn more about another legal system’s perspective on international law, Michigan oversees a variety of carefully selected study-abroad programs at the best legal institutions in the world.

You may also propose your own student-initiated program of study at law faculties of foreign universities. In recent years, students have received approval to study at institutions such as the Austral University in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Victoria University in New Zealand, the University of Hong Kong, and ICADE, Comillas, in Madrid, Spain. The Law School will also allow up to six credits for participation in any ABA-approved study-abroad program administered by another law school.

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Assistant Dean for International Affairs

University of Michigan Law School
Curricular Specialties

It's virtually axiomatic that every top-ranked law school offers a spectrum of outstanding courses, and at Michigan Law, you'd be hard-pressed to name a curricular interest area that is not matched by abundant course offerings. Each institution differs, however, in the unique combination of its special strengths, and at Michigan, you'll find particularly abundant offerings in international, constitutional, intellectual property, environmental, public interest, and business, securities, and transactional law courses. Read below for a description of how the international, interdisciplinary, and interactive lenses combine for extraordinary offerings.

Bear in mind that the overlap is considerable: our interdisciplinary ethos means there are no sharp divisions among most of these subjects at Michigan. As a result, your training in a given field will be more nuanced and complex.

International Law

In 2001, Michigan became the first top law school in the country to require all students to take Transnational Law, exemplifying our commitment to a deep, broad international law curriculum. In an era where virtually every area of the law is internationalized and every lawyer must understand the ramifications of this global transformation, Transnational Law serves as a basic international course upon which more specialized courses build. And while a transnational focus imbues our courses across many disciplines, the number of faculty with an international or foreign law focus, and consequently our range of offerings devoted to international or foreign law-related subjects, is exceptional. Students benefit further from the presence of our distinguished Affiliated Overseas Faculty, a select group of academics who are affiliated with institutions abroad but maintain an ongoing relationship with Michigan. Thus, the array of topics is staggering. Whether your interests lie in human rights, international trade, finance, taxation, antitrust, comparative and public international law, or geographic areas such as Asia or the European Union, Michigan will offer more courses than you can possibly take. Finally, as one would expect from an institution with this level of commitment, the curricular adjuncts—in the form of symposia, conferences, and visiting speakers—round out an environment singularly well-suited to a scholarly exploration of global legal issues.
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Even before I came to Michigan for the first time, almost twenty years ago, I had it already registered on my "map" as one of the leading U.S. law schools most open to international law and most renowned for its offerings in this regard. Since then, the Law School has become the place where I feel most at home as a teacher and scholar, and, more recently, the place to which I return as often as possible from my new base, the International Court of Justice at The Hague, to engage in the kind of stimulating exchanges with students and faculty that I need to remain intellectually lean and mean. It is incredible how many interesting people you meet here—I have always felt invigorated and encouraged by my stays here.

Bruno Simma
Judge
International Court of Justice, The Hague
Affiliated Overseas Faculty
University of Michigan
Law School

Constitutional Law
All law students at any law school must take, at minimum, an introductory constitutional law course. At Michigan, that course is taught by, among others, two former Deputy Assistant Attorneys General for the Office of Legal Counsel (one under President William Clinton, one under President George W. Bush), which is the division of the Department of Justice that articulates constitutional authority for the entire Executive Branch. For upper-level constitutional law work, you can go in multiple directions to explore a variety of specialties in depth. History and constitutional interpretation, federalism and comparative federalism, and constitutional litigation and civil rights work are all amply covered, by a leading political theorist; the preeminent scholar in the nation on the religion clauses of the Constitution; one of the leading constitutional law scholars of his generation; and an expert on comparative federalism. For those students who want to engage in the highest levels of constitutional theory with the leading lights of the constitutional law world, the Constitutional Law Workshop is an unparalleled opportunity through which leading constitutional law theorists from all over the country come to the Law School to present and defend their works in progress. Students read a draft of the work and provide written comments to the presenter, then spend two hours in discussion and debate. This intensive academic experience is particularly well-suited to students who may be interested in careers in academia, and presents a unique opportunity to engage in the interactive critique process.

Intellectual Property Law
The reputation of our intellectual property faculty extends across many subfields, addressing such wide-ranging issues as patent law and biotech, digital copyright and e-commerce, the Internet, as well as traditional copyright and trademark concerns. You'll have an abundance of seminar choices and more than 15 distinct courses each two-year rotation. More, our IP-related workshops bring in leading scholars and litigators from around the globe, with always-changing foci: cyberlaw, perhaps, or law and economics of intellectual property. Likewise, our
conferences draw participants worldwide to discuss the most pressing IP topics of the moment, such as the recent Patents and Diversity in Innovation conference. This groundbreaking conference explored the ways burgeoning technology and innovation threaten to overwhelm a patent system designed for a simpler era, and the deep differences in industry perspective that have stalled patent reform in Congress.

Environmental Law
The Law School's Environmental Law and Policy Program, directed by the former longest-serving Chief of the Environmental Crimes Section at the U.S. Department of Justice, coordinates extensive doctrinal coursework, an environmental law clinic, and externship placements. It also hosts visiting environmental advocates, scholars, and practitioners presenting on a wide range of critical environmental law areas. Our diverse faculty includes nationally and internationally recognized experts on environmental regulation, global climate change, water law, environmental criminal enforcement, conservation, and land use law. Because they approach the field from multiple perspectives (international, administrative, legislative, litigation, and more), our students are trained to excel in a variety of contexts. And because of our strong interdisciplinary commitment, students interested in environmental law and policy can explore the offerings of the School of Natural Resources and the Environment, the Ford School of Public Policy, the Ross School of Business, the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, and the School of Public Health, all situated within easy walking distance of the Law Quad.

Public Interest Law
The umbrella term “public interest law” is difficult to capture in a concise, coherent description. More than any other curricular subset, it covers a multitude of substantive legal areas—civil rights, environmental, child advocacy, urban development, poverty—and practitioners might focus on litigation or on transactional work. Our curriculum will prepare you well regardless
of your particular focus. Our students engage in a comprehensive range of clinical offerings, in all cases serving clients who otherwise lack the means to retain quality counsel. The clinics are augmented by doctrinal courses taught by veteran tenured faculty whose own careers blend scholarship with hands-on advocacy, such as the administrative law expert who teaches prisoner civil rights litigation, or the banking law expert who conducts empirical research on poverty. Finally, our Public Interest/Public Service Faculty Fellows, whose impressive legal careers bring a breadth of practical experience to the classroom, also serve as career mentors and provide an expanded network of contacts for students exploring careers in public interest or government.

**Business, Securities, and Transactional Law**

Michigan's approach to corporate law instruction includes a variety of formats as well as substantive foci. Once you master the basic corporate and partnership law course (regularly taught by six permanent faculty using a variety of scholarly approaches) the upper-level doctrinal offerings are vast. Our 18 tenured and tenure-track faculty specialists have significant experience working with the country's largest firms and investment banks prior to their academic careers. These exceptional scholars include two of the top five tax law professors in the world; the co-author of what many consider the best casebook on securities regulation, and the coauthor of the definitive treatise on the Uniform Commercial Code. And because corporate practice requires global capabilities, Michigan Law offers a faculty with expertise in the development of corporate law in four of the five biggest economies (China, India, Japan, and the United States), along with Canada, Korea, and the European Union. Beyond standard classroom instruction, these faculty have designed advanced practicums to equip students with the writing tools and practical skills to immediately enter private firm corporate practice. Finally, our Business Law Faculty Fellows provide a real-world view of the field that serves as a capstone to a complete corporate-law education.
Toward a full and rewarding life in the law

The very best foundation for a legal career is independence and diversity of thought, anchored by critical reflection on the possibilities and limits of the profession. Said another way, we believe that acquiring a set of professional techniques, while necessary, is hardly sufficient—and that is why everything we do at Michigan Law is intended to help you achieve a full and rewarding life in the law, prepared for a lifetime of choices in a traditional legal career, an alternative career path, or both.

To that end, the curriculum is broad and varied with multidisciplinary offerings and a remarkable number of externships, study-abroad, dual-degree, and clinical opportunities that can support even the most esoteric academic interests and then present multiple avenues through which to manifest that expertise. The community is composed of dynamic, engaged teacher-scholars and students from all over the world who bring a multitude of perspectives to the campus and consistently apply the methods and training from other academic disciplines to their research and study of the law.

This rigorously engaged intellectual environment instills the capacity for critical analysis and encourages our students to focus that lens on the most fundamental, pressing issues facing society. With that solid educational, practical, and ethical foundation created over your three years of study, you will be equipped to be genuine innovators and acknowledged leaders in academia, industry, government, and the legal profession—as prepared for the fast-changing world today as Michigan Law graduates have been for 150 years.
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