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I. Introduction

This Guide to the First Year is prepared by the Dean’s Office with input from several offices on campus to provide information you may find useful during your first year and beyond. We welcome your comments and suggestions for future revisions.

II. Academics

A. The 1L Curriculum

During the first year of law school the courses you take are all required courses. There are two basic types: doctrinal courses (such as Torts, Property, Civil Procedure, Criminal Law, etc.) and skills courses.

B. Doctrinal Courses

These courses are designed to introduce you to the most fundamental areas of the law – the “building blocks” from which other, more specialized legal doctrines evolve. In the fall semester, these courses include Torts, Property, and Civil Procedure. In the spring, the doctrinal courses are Criminal Law, Contracts, Constitutional Law, and Legislation & Regulation.

C. Legal Analysis and Writing I and II | Legal Research I and II

Students take Law Skills in both the fall and spring semesters of their first year. The course teaches students to engage in a principled, systematic process of legal writing, research, and analysis to prepare them for the rigors of a client-centric, service-oriented legal practice in a rapidly changing world. Students learn a process and develop a toolbox of skills that are adaptable to many types of legal issues and communication needs.

D. Method of Instruction

The method of instruction used in the first-year doctrinal courses varies somewhat from professor to professor. However, significant emphasis in each course is placed upon developing your analytical skills. These skills are honed through use of the “case method” in class. After reading and studying cases, students are called upon in class and expected to identify case features such as the relevant facts, the issue(s) presented by the case, the court’s disposition (or “holding”), and the rationale for that disposition based upon applicable rules of law.
III. Preparing for Class

A. General Policy on Class Attendance, Punctuality, and Preparation

The classroom experience, in person or online, is an indispensable part of a student's legal education, and every student is accordingly required to come to attend class fully prepared and on time. The professor shall be responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy, for determining whether a student's failure to comply is excused, and for determining the consequences of an unexcused failure to comply, and shall advise the class of their approach to these matters at the beginning of the semester. Students who need an excused absence due to a religious observance should notify the professor in the first two weeks of the semester, consistent with the University's Religious Observance Policy.

B. Minimum Attendance Requirement

Any student who fails to attend at least 75 percent of a course's required sessions or their equivalent (as determined by the professor, in consultation with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and in conformance with the University's Religious Observance Policy) will not pass the course. This requirement applies regardless of whether the absences are excused and regardless of any individual professor's attendance policy (although an individual professor may impose a more demanding requirement for their course). In appropriate circumstances, students unable to satisfy this requirement may be granted a leave of absence and full reinstatement upon their return. Students should keep track of their own attendance, and a student who is having difficulty meeting this requirement, or who anticipates such difficulty, should meet immediately with the Associate Dean of Students or the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs to discuss the possibility of a course withdrawal or a leave of absence from the law school.

C. Class Preparation

Because the purpose of the case method in first-year instruction is to achieve far more than familiarity with legal doctrine and principles, the classroom experience and effective class participation are essential to the first-year academic experience. First and foremost, this requires a full and careful reading of the assigned materials for each class. Starting at the beginning of the semester, students are often surprised at the amount of time they have to spend to feel fully prepared for class. This time required to fully digest and understand a case will diminish with practice, but for the first few weeks, be prepared to spend a lot of time mastering each case.

D. Briefing a Case

Much of your assigned reading will be opinions published by courts in actual cases. These case opinions can be challenging to read, understand, and remember, therefore most students find it helpful to “brief” the case — that is, to break the opinion into component elements and write
out your understanding of those elements. The brief is an invaluable tool in preparing for class participation. It also will enable you to begin to understand better how the law works in individual cases, the significant aspects of a case, and how to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. Bear in mind that each professor may have a different emphasis on the various aspects of a case for their course, and you will want your case briefing to be tailored to those particular areas of emphasis.

E. Study Guides

There are many commercial study guides available to students which cover the first-year core curriculum. These commercial guides are organized in varying formats, providing both substantive and organizational information for studying, and question-and-answer formats for exam preparation and practice. You can find copies of commercial study aids on reserve in the law library. All commercial study aids are available for purchase either at our campus bookstore or online. Many students also sell these study guides second-hand at the beginning of the school year.

- Commercial outlines are not recommended as a substitute for creating one’s own outline for each class. They can be very useful as a reference to demonstrate how information can be organized in an outline. Nevertheless, each student must attempt to organize the material themselves and articulate material in their own words. Commercial outlines also are available for purchase in the campus bookstore or online.

- Pre-written case briefs for first-year core classes are not recommended as a substitute for class preparation. Students should read the assigned cases and learn to brief the textbook cases themselves in order to assimilate the legal analysis.

F. Study Groups

Although much of your class preparation and studying must be done alone, many students find it helpful to form a study group. Discussing what you have read and covered in class can be an excellent way to enhance your understanding. Generally, study groups are small, with five or fewer members. Although some students will rush to form a study group at the beginning of the academic year, for many it is preferable to wait until closer to exams. Your student partners should be classmates you respect, those with a similar study ethic, and those with whom you feel comfortable. Study time is precious; do not study with someone simply because you are friends. If studying becomes socializing, your study group is not working for you. Conversely, if studying with members in your group causes anxiety, conflict, or stress, your study group is not working for you. Study groups provide a vehicle for you to teach and learn from each other, but should not be viewed as a way to have others do a portion of your workload.
IV. Grading & Examination

A. Exam Procedures

Exam procedures can be found in the Law Catalog. If there are extraordinary circumstances that prevent you from following these procedures, you should contact the Dean’s Office.

B. Anonymous Grading

Courses are, when possible, graded on an anonymous basis. Each year, you will receive a four-digit anonymous administrative number. You should use this number instead of your name on all exams, unless instructed otherwise. It is very important that you use your correct number. Certain courses, however, cannot be graded anonymously. For example, courses with significant writing, performance, or participation requirements fall outside of the anonymous system. Also, certain courses are graded on a partially anonymous system. For example, a first-year course might be graded primarily by use of an exam but might also have a portion of the grade based on classroom participation.

C. Grade Reports

Grade reports are available online at bannerweb.richmond.edu at the end of each semester. We cannot release grades over the phone.

D. Grading Policy

The grading policy for classes you take as a first-year is as follows:

- The mean (average) grade point for each course will be 3.30 +/- .10;
- The following grade distribution shall apply:
  - 20-40% = A or A-
  - 25-45% = B+
  - 10-30% = B
  - 5-25% = B- and below

The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs will have limited discretion to allow faculty to deviate from the above policy. Additional grading rules apply to classes you take as a second or third-year, and those rules are located in the Law Catalog.
E. Grade Appeals

If you object to a grade, you should discuss the grade directly with the faculty member assigning it within the first two weeks after the grade was issued. The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs can correct a grade for a mathematical or clerical error. If a grade appeal is based on any other basis, you should consult directly with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

V. Support & Advising

A. Academic Success Program (ASP)

The ASP helps students adjust to the first-year of law school, reach their academic potential during law school, and ensure that all graduates are fully prepared to meet the challenge of the bar examination. First-year students work with Professor Margaret Ann Walker.

ASP is an open-attendance program providing ongoing support and education through weekly/bi-weekly academic skills classes, workshops, and individual conferences throughout the academic year. Everyone is encouraged to attend, but attendance is voluntary.

First-year students can attend classes and workshops covering case briefing, efficient note-taking, how to create a course outline for exams, effective legal writing, the Blue Book, and exam preparation. ASP also provides coaching on time management strategies and stress management workshops.

B. Faculty Advisors

Every student is assigned a faculty advisor upon entry to law school. Your advisor can provide advice throughout your tenure as a law student. Many students maintain contact with their assigned faculty advisor throughout their law school career. Many others gravitate to a faculty member with whom they have established a close professional bond. Faculty advisors serve as counselors, mentors, and collaborators.

C. Section Advisors (SAs) & Law Student Advisors (LSAs)

Every first-year Law Skills section is assigned a Section Advisor (SA). SAs are trained to serve as a knowledgeable guide for new students and as a thoughtful facilitator who provides access to people and resources. SAs maintain relationships with and provide non-academic assistance and support for new students with a focus on a smooth transition, acclimation, and a sense of belonging at Richmond Law. SAs supplement the advising offered by faculty and often address social and other student issues.
LSAs are upper-class students who volunteer to meet with first-year students one-on-one during orientation, and can often be a helpful resource throughout the first year.

D. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

CAPS offers a wide range of free, short-term mental health-related services for students at the University of Richmond. About one-third of UR students use CAPS services at least once before they graduate. Law school is a stressful experience for many and, on top of that stress, life events may occur during law school which exacerbate that stress. CAPS is staffed by licensed mental health professionals. Their services are free and confidential. You are strongly encouraged to utilize CAPS services if you feel they could help you. No problem is too big or too small. You can find out more information online.

Law students can use CAPS services in two locations – at the CAPS offices located in the Sarah Brunet Hall anytime during normal business hours or at the Law School during designated hours each week. To make an appointment with CAPS at the Sarah Brunet Hall, stop by the CAPS front desk. Sarah Brunet Hall is located directly across from the Law School. To make an appointment to see Hilary Delman, the counselor who sees students part-time at the Law School, email her directly at hdelman@richmond.edu. Remote counseling sessions will be available.

E. Disability Services

You can request disability accommodations at any time during your law school career, even if you have never received accommodations in the past. Academic accommodations can be made for various disabilities including medical, learning, physical, and psychological disabilities. The Associate Dean of Students, Alex Sklut, is the Law School’s Disability Coordinator and is available to answer any questions. You can also visit the Disability Services webpage for more information.

Additionally, there are several disability specialists housed within the University’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) who are available for consultation should you suspect that you have a disability. They can provide counseling as well as referrals for appropriate testing, if warranted. CAPS can be reached at (804) 289-8119, or visit their offices in Sarah Brunet Hall.

VI. Student Employment

Note: Law school policy prohibits any law student from working more than 20 hours per week while attending classes.
A. Federal Work-Study Program

Federal Work-Study (FWS) funds may be available to eligible law students who are interested in working on-campus or at UR Downtown during the fall and spring terms. Adding FWS eligibility to your financial aid package will reduce your eligibility for student loans. If you are interested in FWS funding, contact the Office of Financial Aid to determine your eligibility and if funding is available.

B. University Work Program

Students who do not receive Federal Work-Study funds as part of the financial aid package can seek employment under the University Work Program. Available positions are listed on the Student Employment website.

VII. Financial Planning

A. Budgeting

The financial realities of your legal education are important factors to be planned for and managed. Most students leave law school with student loan debt. Student loan debt, if managed responsibly, is not an overwhelming burden, but rather a very intelligent investment in your future.

You should develop a realistic budget and borrow what you need, not necessarily the maximum for what you are eligible. Plan ahead for all expected expenses like rent, books, groceries, gas, medications, car maintenance, etc. Then set some money aside for unexpected costs and emergencies. There should be room in your budget for non-necessities, but remember, if you are financing your life during law school with student loans it is in your best interest to limit your spending, and therefore your debt, as much as possible.

Remember that unless you enroll in a credit bearing activity for the summer term you will not receive student loan funding for the summer, so it is wise to set some funds aside from both your Fall and Spring disbursements to cover living costs during the summer. Some, but not all, students engage in paid work opportunities over the summer. Better to put some funds away and have extra for the following year if you do find paid work than be left with nothing in the bank over the summer.

B. MAX by AccessLex

MAX by AccessLex is a financial education program hosted online made specifically for law students. The programs include webinars, online lessons, and even one-on-one coaching.
completely free of charge for all Richmond Law students. Topics range from basic information about student loans and budgeting to an introduction to investing. Students may access MAX online.

VIII. Extracurricular Activities

A. School-Life Balance

Extracurricular activities are valuable, and all students are encouraged to participate in them. However, do not feel pressured to join every group, try out for every competition, or attend every event. Decide what makes sense for you and selectively pursue the activities that are most interesting to you. Make sure to ask how much of a time commitment is expected from any extracurricular activity and carefully consider whether you have that time to give before joining.

Creating a school-life balance can be challenging for many students. Try to get plenty of rest, set aside time for exercise, social time, and quiet time. The skill of time management is key to a successful balance. Finding the right balance between academics, extracurricular activities, relationships, and self-care is not always easy, but is essential to your overall well-being and success. Be mindful about which activities you choose to pursue throughout your time in law school.

B. Pro Bono Opportunities

Lawyers have a professional obligation to serve their communities and pro bono service is a great way not only to fulfill this obligation but also to get hands-on legal experience. Additionally, at least one state (New York), has instituted a requirement of 50 pro bono hours of service before you can sit for their Bar Examination.

Richmond Law offers a variety of pro bono opportunities, some of which involve one-time commitments, others are ongoing. Program descriptions may be found online and Pro Bono Placement opportunities are promoted throughout the academic year through Symplicity as well as The Docket. For more information, please contact Professor Tara Casey, Director of the Carrico Center, at 804-287-1207 or tcasey@richmond.edu.

IX. Internal Communications

The best way to find out what is happening around the school is to consult The Docket, distributed every Thursday morning and Sunday evening via email. You’re also invited to connect with the Law School on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

The online master calendar is an all-encompassing list of events taking place in the law school. Please use this as a resource when planning your schedule. Student organizations can request that an event be added to the calendar and The Docket. You’ll also find a list of each day’s events on the TV screen in the front atrium.
X. Honor Code

The Law School honor system is entirely student run. The Honor Council adjudicates claims of academic misconduct under the Law School Honor Code. The Grievance Committee is responsible for investigating and prosecuting Honor Court cases. Members of the Student Advocate Corps are available to provide a defense for the accused student. If a claim of misconduct goes to trial, the Honor Court determines guilt or innocence and, in the event of a guilty verdict, imposes sanctions pursuant to the Code. Justices of the Honor Court, along with members of the Grievance Committee and the Student Advocate Corps are elected by the student body. In the event an accused goes to trial, the Justices serve as impartial jurors in the process. A copy of the Honor Code can be found in the Law School Catalog. Students are bound by the Law School’s Honor Code by virtue of their matriculation at the Law School.

XI. Standards of Conduct

Law students are governed by the Law School Honor Code as well as the University’s Standards of Conduct. The purpose of the Standards of Conduct is to help ensure an environment that is most conducive to academic learning. The Standards define the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities regarding conduct of individuals and groups that make up the student academic community, and to identify those standards of conduct the University of Richmond deems essential for fulfilling its educational mission and its community life. The Standards govern the conduct of students and their guests on the campus of the University of Richmond or at University-sponsored activities and functions. The full text of the Standards of Conduct along with the consequent disciplinary procedures can be found in the Law School Catalog.

XII. Student Complaints

The official University process for reporting student complaints, including incidents of discrimination bias, includes two levels. Students may submit informal feedback and via the Informal Complaint Form, which is submitted to Law School administrators. This form may be used to submit feedback on issues big and small, from complaints about facilities to reporting of a bias incident.

Students may submit formal feedback, as detailed in the Student Complaint Policy, via the Student Complaint Form. This process is managed by the University’s Student Development office, in partnership with Law School leadership and Common Ground.

If information obtained through the Informal or Formal Complaint forms leads administrators to believe that bias activity and/or sexual misconduct has occurred, that information will be passed along to the offices overseeing bias activity and/or sexual misconduct as described below.
XIII. Sexual Misconduct Policy

Sexual misconduct is prohibited at the University of Richmond. Sexual misconduct is a broad range of behavior that includes, but is not limited to, non-consensual sexual intercourse, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, and stalking.

The University of Richmond sexual misconduct policy applies to sexual misconduct complaints involving applicants for admission, or students aggrieved by third parties such as contractors or vendors serving the University.

A. Sexual Misconduct Reporting

The University of Richmond strongly supports and encourages prompt reporting of sexual misconduct. Reporting provides resources to survivors and contributes to keeping the campus safe.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual misconduct, you should report incident(s) to the University's Title IX Coordinator and to the University Police Department. Instances of sexual misconduct may violate both the University's sexual misconduct policy and the law.

Unless designated as a confidential resource, all University employees are required to report incidents of possible sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinators and those employees designated as Campus Security Authorities must also report to the University Police.

XIV. Bias Activity

The University of Richmond is committed to being a diverse and inclusive community, strengthened intellectually and socially by the range of knowledge, opinion, belief, political perspective and background of its members, whether of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, ability status, age, religious, economic or geographic origin.

Because bias activity has the potential to adversely affect the members of the University community and to undermine the climate of civility and respect necessary to achieve and maintain a diverse and inclusive community, the University has developed a protocol designed to supplement existing University policies and procedures and to coordinate University resources in response to complaints of bias activity. You can learn more at the Common Ground office on campus.

As used in this protocol, the term 'bias activity' includes the following:
A. Bias/Hate Crimes

Defined as any criminal offense or attempted criminal offense that one could reasonably conclude is motivated, in whole or in part, by the alleged offender's bias against an individual's actual or perceived age, ancestry or ethnicity, color, creed, disability, gender, immigration or citizenship status, marital status, national origin, race, religion, religious practice or sexual orientation.

B. Discrimination

Defined as a violation of the University's Harassment and Discrimination Policy, other applicable University policies and procedures and/or applicable anti-discrimination laws.

C. Bias Incident

Defined as acts that do not appear to constitute a crime or actionable discrimination, but which may intimidate, mock, degrade, or threaten, individuals or groups and which one could reasonably conclude targets a member or group within the University community because of that individual or group's actual or perceived age, ancestry or ethnicity, color, creed, disability, gender, gender identity or expression, immigration or citizenship status, marital status, national origin, race, religion, religious practice or sexual orientation.

D. Report a Bias/Hate Crime

Students, faculty, and staff who are victims of or who witness activity that is or could reasonably be considered a bias/hate crime, including but not limited to assaults, attempted assaults, destruction or damage to property or defacement of property should report such activity immediately to University Police anonymously or using the URPD Silent Witness reporting webpage. Where appropriate, the University Police will notify the Bias Resource Team of reports of bias/hate crimes occurring on campus.

E. Report Incidents of Discrimination

Students, faculty, and staff who are subjected to or believe they may be the subject of discrimination prohibited by University policies or applicable laws or who witness potential
discrimination should file a complaint in accordance with the University's Harassment and Discrimination Policy. Complaints of discrimination may also be made, informally, to the director of Common Ground, Dr. Glyn Hughes, who shall assist the individual making the complaint in pursuing such complaint through applicable University policies and in accessing available University resources for support and guidance. You may contact Dr. Hughes at ghughes@richmond.edu.

F. Report a Bias Incident

Students, faculty, and staff who are the subject of or who witness a Bias Incident may report such incidents to the director of Common Ground, by completing this bias incident reporting form. The Common Ground director will assist individuals making reports in identifying appropriate University resources for support and guidance, and will notify the members of the Bias Resource Team of such reports.

G. Academic Freedom

This protocol shall be interpreted and implemented in a manner consistent with the University's commitment to academic freedom, as described in Article III (F) of the Faculty Handbook.

XV. Campus Resources

One Card Student ID | Heilman Center
https://onecard.richmond.edu/get/index.html
Every student at the University must have a photo identification card, called a One Card. This card verifies that the holder is eligible to receive University library and other campus privileges. A One Card can be obtained through the One Card Office. Please visit their website to view all the things you can do with your card.

Post Office | Heilman Center
https://campusservices.richmond.edu/offices/mail.html
The University has its own post office. You can mail (and receive) packages and buy stamps, etc. The building sits just above the Heilman Dining Center. You must purchase a post office box in order to receive mail at the Post Office.

Tyler Haynes Commons
https://events.richmond.edu/events/locations/tyler-haynes-commons.html
Main student center for the University. There are several large screen TVs and comfortable chairs in the building.
Spider Shop | Tyler Haynes Commons
https://www.urspidershop.com/
You can purchase your textbooks, as well as all of your Spider gear, at the University Bookstore.

Common Ground | Tyler Haynes Commons
https://commonground.richmond.edu/
Common Ground promotes a thriving, equitable, and fully-participatory University community deeply engaged with the broader social world.

Tyler’s Grill | Tyler Haynes Commons
https://dining.richmond.edu/locations/tylers-grill.html
Tyler’s offers flavorful wraps, freshly prepared salads, and hamburgers made fresh every day. They also offer breakfast options.

Meal Plans | Heilman Dining Center
https://dining.richmond.edu/meal-plans/
Off-Campus Law, MBA, and SPCS students are not required to have a meal plan, but can purchase a Spider Red, Spider Blue, Spider 40, Spider Unlimited, or Spider Plus Unlimited. To make a selection log in to Bannerweb, click on Student Services, then click on the Housing Main Menu, click on Star Rez and then click on the off-campus meal plan link to select a meal plan.

ETC Convenience Store | Heilman Dining Center
https://dining.richmond.edu/locations/etc.html
ETC is an on-campus convenience store that office groceries, snacks, toiletries, and local coffee.

Lou’s Café | Robins School of Business
https://dining.richmond.edu/locations/lous.html
Lou’s features grab-and-go fresh sound, sandwiches, salads, and desserts. Menu selections are based on seasonal availability and may vary.

Passport Café | Carole Weinstein International Center
https://dining.richmond.edu/locations/passport-cafe.html
The Passport Café is an award-winning international eatery. Their menu features daily global specials with grab-and-go options.

Boatwright Memorial Library
https://library.richmond.edu/
The University has a large library with a selection of casual reading materials. Comfortable seating also is available.

Eight-Fifteen at Boatwright | Boatwright Memorial Library
https://dining.richmond.edu/locations/eight-fifteen-at-boatwright.html
This café is located inside Boatwright Library. Eight-Fifteen features coffee drinks as well as grab-and-go food items.
Computer Issues | Muse Law Library
https://is.richmond.edu/
Please contact the computer help desk in the law library with any technology questions you may have.

Financial Aid | Queally Center
https://financialaid.richmond.edu/
Students can call any time to ask questions about their aid, loans, etc.

Student Accounts | Queally Center
https://controller.richmond.edu/tuition/office.html
Tuition payments, fines, etc. can be taken care of at this office or online.

Registrar’s Office | Queally Center
https://registrar.richmond.edu/
Students register for classes online. The Registrar’s office can help with problems, questions, transcripts, etc. Your first point of contact on these types of questions should be Sharon Krol in Dean’s Office (202A).

Public Safety and Student Health Center | Special Programs Building
https://wellness.richmond.edu/healthcenter/index.html
The University has a full health center offering medical assistance (whether you have University health insurance or not). The Health Center staff includes board-certified family practice physicians and registered nurses.

Fitness Facilities | Weinstein Center for Recreation and Wellness
https://recreation.richmond.edu/
The Weinstein Center is a free, full-service gym complex open until midnight every day of the week (hours may vary during the summer, check the website for full details). You will need your One Card for access. There is a pool and just about every type of equipment you could want. This benefit is included in your tuition. You will have access to the gym for an additional year after you graduate. This “4th” year is a benefit to all law students. You can also sign up for any intramurals and sports clubs through the wellness center.

Sports
https://richmondspiders.com/sports/2015/7/9/210109587.aspx
The University offers Division 1-AA Football and Men’s Division 1 Basketball among other sports. You can obtain tickets at the Robins Center. Law student intramurals and other informal competitions are frequent. Keep an eye out for emails with more information.

Parking Services | Special Programs Building
https://parking.richmond.edu/contact/index.html
If you pre-registered your vehicle for 2020-21 parking permits, the permits will be distributed with your orientation material. If you have not pre-registered your vehicle for 2020-21 permits, you may do so online.
If you park in faculty/staff lot(s) during designated hours, you will get ticketed. If you park on the grass anywhere, you will get towed or ticketed. You can appeal tickets to Parking Services. There is a Parking Appeals Board on which one law student sits.

**Police | Special Programs Building**  
[https://police.richmond.edu/](https://police.richmond.edu/)

The University has its own police department. They take your safety very seriously and offer a host of information and tips on crime prevention online. You can also find information on the safety shuttle providing transportation around campus.