

University of Baltimore

Master of Arts in Legal Studies

A Guide to Designing Your Program of Study

current as of October 2019

Academic Program Coordinator: Toni Martsoukos (amartsoukos@ubalt.edu)
Program Director: Michele Cotton (mcotton@ubalt.edu)

NOTE: These materials are not intended to substitute for the official program requirements and policies, which are found on the LEST website at <http://www.ubalt.edu/cas/graduate-programs-and-certificates/degree-programs/legal-studies/> and in the UB catalogue. Rather, this guide is designed to assist you in taking best advantage of the program in pursuing your interests and career goals.

Designing Your Program of Study

The master's degree program in Legal Studies (LEST) provides you with a variety of ways to study and learn about the law. Whether you plan to go to use the legal knowledge and skills you acquire to obtain a law-related job, advance in your current job, and/or prepare for law school, or simply have a strong interest in the law and want to explore it further, you can design a program of study in LEST to suit your interests and goals. This guide is intended to help you with that process.

1. General Considerations

Since you will have to complete 36 credits satisfactorily in order to obtain the master's degree, it makes sense from the start to think about how what courses you plan to take for those credits.

The schedule of courses that you choose in any given semester depends not only on which courses are offered, but also on other factors including the following:

- If you receive financial aid or reimbursement from your employer, you may have certain requirements to meet in order to receive the aid or reimbursement.
- If you have a job with long hours or you have a busy home life, you have to consider your time constraints in deciding how much coursework to take on.
- If you were conditionally accepted into the program, you may be asked to take only one or two courses at the outset in order to help enable you to get off to a more successful start.

In general, however, students take an average of two to three courses per semester. Three (3) courses is a full load. An "overload" of four (4) courses in a semester requires permission of the Dean's Office (and in making the decision whether to permit an overload, the Dean's Office will generally expect the student to have a GPA of 3.5 or better). Be thoughtful about how much to take on if you have substantial other demands on your time.

It generally takes about two years to get the degree (at a regular load of three (3) courses per semester). A student may do it faster by taking courses during the summers and/or using transfer credits from another program (for information about transfer credits, see the LEST website).

There is also an outer time limit for completion of the degree. The general maximum time for completing the program is seven (7) years, although taking that long may require special permission (consult the catalogue for further information, including the requirements for leaves of absence).

You will also need to consider how your schedule affects your achievement of the standards set by the College. **You are required to maintain an overall grade point average of 3.0.** If you fall below a cumulative GPA of 3.0, you may be placed on probation, suspended, or dismissed. (The catalogue contains further information about application of the College's standards.)

The thing to keep in mind is that you need an *overall* 3.0. That doesn't mean that you can never receive a grade below a B, but it does mean that for every grade below a B, you will need another higher grade to counterbalance. For example, if you get a B-, you will need to have a B+ elsewhere on your transcript to bring you up to a 3.0. Similarly, a C grade can be counterbalanced by an A. In addition, one "repeat and replace" option is offered for grades of C+ and lower (consult the catalogue for details), which can help if your GPA falls below a 3.0. However, **not all courses are eligible for repeat and replace**, so keep in mind that it can't be counted on in every situation.

2. Required Courses (12 credits)

You will need to take four (4) required courses. They are **LEST 500 Legal Research and Analysis**, **LEST 501 Legal Foundations**, **LEST 502 Law and Society**, and the **Capstone Experience** course (for which there are three options to choose from). (The only students not required to take all of these required courses are those who have completed substantial equivalents in law school or a comparable program, and who have received permission from the Program Director to transfer those credits.)

A. Three required courses to take at the beginning of your program

Three of the required courses are usually taken early in your time in the program and consist of:

LEST 500 Legal Research and Analysis
LEST 501 Legal Foundations
LEST 502 Law and Society

LEST 500 emphasizes research, analysis, writing, and argumentation in the law. LEST 501 provides background knowledge about the legal system, including its structure, origin, and goals. LEST 502 gives a sense of the context of the legal system, including its historical, social, and ethical aspects. (Full course descriptions are in Appendix A of this Guide.) These courses are intended to give you knowledge and skills in the law and help you be fully prepared for your electives and for your capstone experience.

It is important to be aware of the schedule of when courses are offered. Required courses are offered once every year, so you will generally have at least two chances to take them during any given two-year period. But be careful to avoid the situation of being unable to graduate because you have failed to take a required course. In addition, electives are usually offered only once during any two-year period, so it generally makes sense to take desired electives when they are offered. (See Appendix B for the likely schedule of course offerings during your time in the program.)

B. One required course to take at the end of your program

The other required course for the program is the **Capstone Experience**. For the Capstone Experience, you will choose one of three options:

LEST 696 Internships
LEST 697 Applied Projects
LEST 699 Independent Study

These courses are designed to give you practical experience and the opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge you have gained in the program. *Consult with the Program Director the semester before you plan to finish your degree to get help in making the decision of which Capstone Experience you will choose and to prepare for that course.*

Note that you can take more than one of these Capstone courses or take any of them more than once, and have the extra Capstone course or courses count as electives for completing program requirements (see Elective Courses below).

3. Elective Courses (24 credits)

The program requires 24 credits (8 classes) of electives.

You will need to ensure that your electives include courses from the following:

Areas of Law (at least 6 credits)

Legal Topics (at least 6 credits)

Areas of Law courses cover particular practice areas, such as Constitutional Law or Family Law. **Legal Topics** courses deal with legal skills and legal issues, such as litigation or professional ethics. (See Appendix A for the classification for each course.)

The remaining twelve (12) elective credits can be satisfied in various ways:

- Additional courses from either or both **Areas of Law** or **Legal Topics**.
- Capstone courses** where more than one has been taken or any of them has been taken more than once. (Extra Capstone courses may also be used to satisfy the 6-credit requirement for either of the two elective types, with the permission of the Program Director.)
- Other Discipline Electives** consisting of up to nine (9) credits taken in another graduate program, with the Program Director's approval. (However, if you have already transferred or plan to transfer credits from another program, be aware that the nine (9) credits that may be used for Other Discipline Electives will be reduced by the number of the transferred credits.)

In addition, note that students planning to go to law school are particularly encouraged to take LEST 600 Complex Legal Analysis among their electives.

4. Advising

Upon beginning the program, you will need to meet with the Academic Program Coordinator to select courses for your first semester. After that, the responsibility for choosing your courses will generally be yours. However, we encourage you to contact the Academic Program Coordinator or the Program Director at any time that you have questions or need assistance in choosing courses. In addition, as you approach graduation, please avail yourself of the opportunity to meet with the Academic Program Coordinator to do a “graduation audit” to ensure that you have fulfilled the requirements and are on schedule to graduate.

In addition, it is helpful to consult the UB website, including the LEST website, for links and updates to program offerings and information, as well as the UB catalogue.

If you are interested in law school or any other law-related career, feel free to discuss it with the Program Director. And consult the UB Prelaw website for information about law school, the law school application process, law-related events and activities, and also the varied career paths involving the law that don’t require a law degree.

APPENDIX A: LEST Course Descriptions

[as of Oct. 2019]

[**R** = required course; **AL** = Areas of Law course; **LT** = Legal Topics course]

LEST 500 Legal Research and Analysis (3) Intensive course on the ways law and regulations are made and interpreted, the sources of legal research and proper styles of legal citation. Students are required to learn how to read and analyze court decisions and to write effectively about legal issues. Required of all students in the first semester upon entering the program. [**R**]

LEST 501 Legal Foundations (3) In-depth exploration of the organization of the American legal system. Examines how law is organized as a field of knowledge and practice and how it functions as an instrument of government and arena of dispute resolution. Also considers the context of law and law's effectiveness in promoting justice and social policies. [**R**]

LEST 502 Law and Society (3) An examination of the ethical significance, historical background, and social impact of law. Focuses on legal issues of historical and/or contemporary importance, and considers the extent to which law vindicates ethical concerns and accomplishes social objectives. [**R**]

LEST 600 Complex Legal Analysis (3) Advanced legal analysis and writing. High level comprehension of cases and statutes, solidification of good legal research techniques, and effective presentation of written legal analysis and argument are emphasized. Students will look at important legal issues in a variety of areas as subjects for class discussion and exercises as well as writing assignments, as a means of developing skills useful in law. *prerequisite: LEST 500* [**LT**]

LEST 601 Ethics and Advocacy (3) Provides a detailed study of current legal ethics. Promotes understanding of ethical conflicts faced by lawyers in their daily professional and personal lives, demonstrates methods of reconciliation of conflicts among competing ethical rules and standards, and compares and contrasts legal ethics with conventional ethical norms. Surveys the contemporary culture of the legal profession in its various settings including professional, judicial and educational environments in which legal ethics are embedded. *prerequisites: LEST 501, LEST 507 and LEST 508 or permission of program director* [**LT**]

LEST 603 Law of Contracts (3) Explores the elements of a legally enforceable agreement, defenses to contract actions, and statutory modifications to the common law of contracts. Considers the balancing of different interests in contemporary contract law, including considerations of fairness, social and economic policy objectives, and individuals' freedom to structure commercial and personal relationships. [**AL**]

LEST 604 Law of Business Organizations (3) Introduction to the law of business organizations, including their history, function, and public policy implications. Forms covered include individual proprietorships, partnerships, and corporations, as well as newer variations such as limited liability

companies. Topics include methods of finance and control, and the rights and obligations of the principals, agents, and third parties. [AL]

LEST 605 Areas of Law (3) Varying course offering that explores a particular area of law. Course may be repeated for credit where topic differs. [AL]

LEST 606 Family Law (3) The legal problems confronting modern families. Examines the law of marriage, marriage-like relationships, cohabitation, and divorce, in the context of the ever-changing definition of family. Also considers legal issues relating to children, including custody, support, and the complications arising from reproductive technologies. [AL]

LEST 607 Property Law (3) Basic law of property, including philosophical and ethical justifications and important historical developments in the scheme of ownership in Anglo-American Law. Focus is on current property law from the viewpoint of its underlying rationales and policy considerations. [AL]

LEST 609 Employment Law (3) The law of employment in its social, ethical, and historical context. The course examines common law principles of employment contracts, the employment at will doctrine, and a wide range of regulatory regimes governing work. The class will consider leading cases covered in depth, in their economic, social and historical context. In addition, the class will consider employment law in its practical and principled applications by taking up the ethics of human resources and industrial relations. [AL]

LEST 610 Legal Topics (3) Varying course offering that explores a particular issue, context, or method of the law. Course may be repeated for credit where topic differs. [LT]

LEST 614 Torts (3) The civil law of reparation for harm done by wrongful acts. Examines many of the causes of action available under theories of intentional wrongdoing, negligence, and strict liability. Considers the range of problems and issues that arise in contemporary practice, as well as their historical roots. [AL]

LEST 615 Criminal Law (3) Substantive, procedural, and constitutional criminal law. Criminal law involves those actions that society identifies as particularly contrary to morality and society's best interests. The classification of certain actions as crimes and the rationales for such classification will be studied, based on the Model Penal Code and Maryland criminal law. Further, the criminal process, from investigation through appeal, will be examined, including both those features mandated by state law and by the U.S. Constitution. [AL]

LEST 616 Constitutional Law (3) The American constitutional form of government and the amendments establishing individual rights. The course will focus on the parts of the U.S. Constitution that are concerned with civil liberties but also with the structure in which such liberties are protected. First Amendment, Due Process, and Equal Protection will be particularly emphasized. [AL]

LEST 617 Administrative Law (3) The history, function, and powers of administrative agencies. The course will cover administrative agencies on the federal level and parallel state and local government level. It will examine the function of administrative agencies generally, including their rule-making and adjudicative powers, and practice and procedure before such agencies. The course will also look at judicial review of administrative agency decisions. [AL]

LEST 624 Professional Ethics (3) An overview of professional ethics in law, business, finance, health care, and other fields. Covers ethical concepts that apply across professions as well as many of the specific ethical rules that apply to particular professions. Considers the rules in the context of important legal cases and controversial contemporary problems. Includes the study of ethical theory as well as applications. [LT]

LEST 625 Topics in Applied Ethics (3) Varying course offering that explores a particular topic in applied ethics. Course may be repeated for credit where topic differs. [LT]

LEST 626 The Trial Process (3) The procedural, evidentiary, and strategic aspects of litigation. The course introduces the basics of pleadings, discovery, motion practice, rules of evidence, and trial techniques. The class will cover how court cases are initiated, prepared, and tried. Participation in a mock trial will be part of the instruction. [LT]

LEST 628 Environmental Law and Ethics (3) The pressing ethical, legal, and political issues facing the world today that have to do with the relationship between humans and the non-human world. The course will explore environmental ethics through classic and contemporary readings from a wide array of philosophic and literary traditions. Further, it will examine the role legal institutions play in our efforts (or lack thereof) to deal with ethical issues involving the environment. [LT]

LEST 629 Biomedical Ethics (3) Explores the ethical considerations that affect legal decision-making on biomedical issues. Among the subjects that may be considered are medical paternalism, patient autonomy and informed consent, research involving human subjects, justice in health care, genetic testing, enhancement, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. The focus is on developing an understanding of varied ethical perspectives and how they relate to controversial biomedical issues. [LT]

LEST 696 Internships (3) Application of legal knowledge and skills at a designated nonprofit organization, government entity, or business. Students will learn about the role that law plays in the activities or services of the site, and how law is used to address issues and solve problems. This course may be taken more than once, with the approval of the program director. Prerequisite: *approval of program director* [R]

LEST 697 Applied Projects (3) Focused and intensive work on one or more projects applying legal knowledge and skills to real world situations to solve problems and improve processes. Students may select from already ongoing projects, or develop their own. This course may be taken more than

once, with the approval of the program director. Prerequisite: *approval of program director* [R]

LEST 699 Independent Study (3) Individual exploration, with the guidance of a faculty member adviser, of an area of interest involving the law. Can take the form of working through a reading list with discussion and short reflection papers; or researching and writing a longer paper, article, or memorandum; or any other appropriate advanced academic study. This course may be taken more than once, with the approval of the program director. Prerequisite: *approval of program director* [R]

APPENDIX B

COURSE SCHEDULE TEMPLATE (a plan, not a guarantee!) (10/19)			1 ST cycle			2 nd cycle		
Course #	Title	Instructor(s)	Fl	Sp	Su	Fl	Sp	Su
500	Legal Research & Analysis	Cotton	✓	✓		✓	✓	
501	Legal Foundations	Moran	✓			✓		
502	Law and Society	All		✓			✓	
600	Complex Legal Analysis	Cotton					✓	
601	Ethics & Advocacy	Moran						
603	Contracts	Moran					✓	
604	Business Organizations	McDermitt					✓	
605	Areas of Law	Law school faculty	✓	✓		✓	✓	
606	Family Law	Cotton, Moran		✓				
607	Property	Cotton, Trumpbour	✓					
609	Employment Law	Trumpbour				✓		
610	Legal Topics	Law school faculty	✓	✓		✓	✓	
614	Torts	Trumpbour					✓	
615	Criminal Law	Trumpbour				✓		
616	Constitutional Law	McDermitt		✓				
617	Administrative Law	Moran	✓					
624	Professional Ethics	Cotton				✓		
625	Topics in Applied Ethics	All						
626	The Trial Process	Cotton	✓					
628	Environmental Law & Ethics	Kassner						
629	Biomedical Ethics	TBD						
696	Internships	Cotton	✓	✓		✓	✓	
697	Applied Projects	Cotton	✓	✓		✓	✓	
699	Independent Study	Cotton	✓	✓		✓	✓	

Required = Areas of Law = Legal Topics =

Note: Courses without a designated schedule are offered on an irregular basis.

APPENDIX C: Faculty Profiles

Michele Cotton, Assistant Professor. Ph.D., Brandeis University; J.D., New York University. Specialties: Criminal law and public interest law.

Justin Hollimon, Adjunct Professor. J.D., Howard University School of Law. Specialties: Litigation, both criminal and civil.

Joshua Kassner, Assistant Professor. Ph.D., University of Maryland, College Park; J.D., University of Baltimore. Specialties: Philosophy of law, human rights.

Samantha McDermitt, Adjunct Professor. LL.M., University of Pennsylvania. Speciality: Constitutional law.

Michael Moran, Adjunct Professor. J.D., University of Baltimore. Specialties: Administrative law, land use, and taxation.

Jason Trumpbour, Adjunct Professor. Ph.D., Cambridge University; J.D., Duke University. Specialties: Criminal law, legal history, and the legal profession.

