

Spring 2024--Law 675
Introduction to the Profession/Professional Identity Development
West Virginia University College of Law

Course Coordinators: Jennifer Powell, MSW, JD; Assistant Dean, Student Services and Engagement; Amelia Smith Rinehart, MS, JD; William J. Maier, Jr., Dean and Professor of Law

Powell office hours/contact information: M-F, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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Class meetings: Class lecture select Tuesdays, 8:30 a.m. to 9:20 a.m.; small group discussions select Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. (Full schedule attached separately)

Required Text: The Formation of Professional Identity: The Path from Student to Lawyer, Logan, Floyd, and Floyd. Routledge Press: New York. 2020.

Recommended Text: Essential Qualities of the Professional Lawyer, Haskins, Ed. American Bar Association: 2013

Course Information and Syllabus for Introduction to the Profession/Professional Identity

In this course students will engage in reflection about the legal profession, their professional identity, and what essential skills, habits, and traits are needed to succeed in the legal profession. The American Bar Association, which serves as the accrediting body for law schools, promulgated a new standard for legal education. ABA standard 303 states that: (b) a law school shall provide substantial opportunities for students to participate in: (1) law clinics or field placement(s); (2) pro bono legal services, including law-related public service activities; and (3) *the development of a professional identity*. . .

What is professional identity development? According to interpretation 303-5 professional identity includes, but is not limited to, *the knowledge, skills, values and morals, goals, and personality traits considered foundational to a successful legal practice. From their first year until graduation, students should have frequent opportunities to develop their professional identity.*

This course is designed to give you an opportunity to begin to craft and reflect on your professional identity.

What is professional identity? Professional identity is a representation of the self, achieved in stages over time, during which the characteristics, values, and norms of the legal profession are internalized, resulting in an individual *thinking, acting, and feeling* like a lawyer.

Ideally, the *professional* identity that you form (starting in law school is consistent with who you are as a person. That sounds simple, but, as we will discuss, may be difficult to achieve.

Your professional identity will influence how you interact with everyone else in your career as a lawyer, including your clients, supervisors, and colleagues, as well as judges, opposing counsel, those who need legal services but cannot afford them, and the public.

In this course, our goal is to help you create the foundation for a successful, fulfilling, and impactful career in law. In this course, students will learn the meaning of professional identity and will develop a common vocabulary for discussing it.

Learning outcomes:

At the end of this class, students will demonstrate knowledge of and development of their professional identities as law students growing into future lawyers.

Students will apply and analyze information about professional identity development gained through lectures, small group discussions, and reading assignments. Topics covered will include: Cultural competence, well-being and self-care, developing a client-serving orientation, civility, leadership, and service to others.

Students will then analyze and evaluate their professional identity development by completing reflective writing assignments and by creating a final written self-evaluation project.

In this final project, students will analyze and draw conclusions about what they have read and discussed; make connections between readings and discussions and themselves; reflect on what they have learned and how they will use the newly acquired information; and will reflect on their goals for their professional development moving forward.

Lectures and background readings: In this course, students begin each class week with a lecture on Tuesday. There are assigned readings for each lecture topic. Different professionals, lawyers, and judges will present when we meet, and from these lectures you will learn essential skills that will help you become a successful lawyer. Those skills and values will include discussions of competence, diligence, communication, civility, continuous professional development, becoming a leader, and serving the community.

Weekly small discussion groups: In addition to Tuesday lectures, the members of this class will be divided into ten sections of approximately ten students. Each of these sections will meet on Thursdays following the Tuesday lectures. Thursday small group sessions will be fifty-minute discussion groups led by a lawyer who is a faculty member or professional staff member at the College of Law. These discussions will further explore the topic of the week and the reading assignments and responsive writing assignments.

Attendance: Attendance at all Tuesday lectures and at all Thursday small group sessions is required. Attendance will be taken at all class meetings.

Grades and Assessments: This is a one credit hour, pass/fail course.

To pass, a student must:

1. Attend Tuesday lecture sessions.
2. Complete all assigned reading and submit all reflective writing assignments by the due dates listed on the course schedule.
3. Attend and actively participate in their small group discussion sessions on Thursdays.
4. Submit a final project, due on Friday, April 19 by 5 p.m.

Details on the readings, reflective writing, and final project are contained in the course schedule document that accompanies this syllabus.

Any student who misses more than 25% of class sessions (lecture and small group) or who fails to submit more than 25% of reflective writing assignments or fails to submit the final project will fail this course. Your written assignments will be due by the listed deadlines. Timeliness is one of the most important professional competencies for attorneys. In law practice, failing to adhere to deadlines may harm your client (and result in professional sanctions against you). You must develop the habit of submitting your work on time. If you are experiencing personal or academic difficulties that are interfering with your ability to attend or complete course assignments, please contact Assistant Dean Powell immediately.

Accommodations: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that we guarantee that all students with disabilities have a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact the WVU Office of Accessibility Services.

You can apply for accommodations here: https://wvu-accommodate.symphlicity.com/public_accommodation

If you have been granted accommodations, you are required to meet with you professor to discuss those accommodations and how we can best meet your needs to be successful in this course.

Academic Integrity. Students are expected to recognize and accept the standards, obligations, and responsibilities found in the WVU College of Law Student Code of Professional Responsibility. This can be found at <http://law.wvu.edu/student-life/codeofprofessional-responsibility>.

All WVU and WVU College of Law rules and regulations governing classes and student and faculty conduct apply to this class.

Use of Artificial Intelligence in this course: A word about AI writing assistance: some forms of writing assistance that utilize artificial intelligence (AI) are acceptable, like spellcheck or Grammarly. I consider these tools to be ones that help you enhance and refine your own writing. You are permitted to use these types of tools.

By contrast, tools that rely on generative AI, such as GPT-3 or Chat GPT, actually “write” or generate text from an input you provide. Do not use these tools in this course. This course is

designed to have you reflect on and write on topics related to your own professional identity. Please only submit work that you personally wrote for this course.

Confidentiality. In this course, please be mindful of and keep confidential all issues of a personal or professional nature that are discussed in class.

Diversity/Inclusivity Statement. The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion and we expect to maintain that environment in this course. For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives please see <https://diversity.wvu.edu>

Sexual Misconduct Statement. West Virginia University does not tolerate sexual misconduct, including harassment, stalking, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or relationship violence [[BOG Rule 1.6](#)]. It is important for you to know that there are resources available if you or someone you know needs assistance. You may speak to a member of university administration, faculty, or staff; keep in mind that they have an obligation to report the incident to the [Title IX Coordinator](#). (<https://titleix.wvu.edu/staff>)

If you want to speak to someone who is permitted to keep your disclosure confidential, please seek assistance from our onsite Behavioral Health Therapist, Kathy Servian, at kathleen.servian@mail.wvu.edu or **304 293-0001**; the [Carruth Center, 304-293-4431](#) (24/7 hotline), and locally within the community at the [Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center](#) (RDVIC), **304- 292-5100**.

Student Evaluation of Instruction Statement. Effective teaching is a primary mission of West Virginia University. Student evaluation of instruction provides the university and the instructor with feedback about your experiences in the course for review and course improvement. Your participation in the evaluation of course instruction is both strongly encouraged and highly valued. Results are strictly confidential, anonymous, and not available to the instructor until after final grades are released by Admissions and Records.

Wellness. Law school can be stressful. It can exacerbate existing mental health struggles and give rise to new ones. The WVU College of Law is committed to promoting wellness for all students. If you ever find yourself struggling (academically, personally, or emotionally), please do not hesitate to ask for help. We will discuss lawyer wellness and coping strategies as part of this course. If you wish to seek out WVU campus resources, some basic information is available at <http://law.wvu.edu/student-life/student-resources>. You can reach out to me for assistance or referrals. My email is Jennifer.powell@mail.wvu.edu; my office phone number is 304 293 7250; my cell phone number is 304 290 1023.

The Carruth Center also offers support for a range of mental health and wellness issues in a confidential and safe environment. We have a Behavior Health Therapist from the Carruth Center on staff at the law school. Her name is Kathy Servian. You may reach her at Kathleen.servian@mail.wvu.edu. Her office phone number is 304 293 0001.

Finally, the West Virginia Judicial & Lawyers Assistance Program (WVJLAP) is a free and confidential program funded by the West Virginia Bar Association. WVJLAP offers wellness assistance regarding a variety of topics (such as stress, depression, substance abuse, and grief counseling) to all members of the legal community, specifically including law students and bar applicants. WVJLAP can be reached at (304) 553-7273 or at <https://wvjlap.org>

COVID. The WVU College of Law remains committed to maintaining a safe learning environment for all its students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Masks are not required on WVU campuses but are always welcome. The College of Law has disposable masks and hand sanitizer available for your use. If you contract COVID-19, you must [isolate for 5 days and wear a mask for an additional 5 days](#) while in the classroom or other indoor spaces.

If you contract COVID-19 you are responsible for alerting Associate Dean John Taylor and working with him and your professors on a plan for missed classes and course work. For personal safety and the safety of others, students and employees should not ignore [symptoms of COVID-19](#). Those with any COVID-19 symptoms should not report to campus for work or class.

Remote Attendance (aka “Zooming In”). If you need to be absent from class because you test positive for COVID, must quarantine, or need to take a COVID test, the absence falls under the University’s attendance policy found here: [attendance](#).

Emergency absences are also governed by the College of Law’s regulating body, the ABA. The ABA will only allow remote attendance (that is, both “Zooming In” or attendance by watching a video) under “exceptional circumstances” and the College of Law must track all such remote attendance. “Exceptional circumstances” include things such as COVID, a death or emergency in the family, or a serious illness or hospitalization.

To comply with both sets of rules, a student who has COVID, is testing for COVID, or has what they believe are “exceptional circumstances,” should notify the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs John Taylor (john.taylor@mail.wvu.edu). Dean Taylor will provide me with a written authorization for you to make alternative arrangements to attend class remotely, whether by video, Zoom, or an alternative method determined in my discretion. Once I receive this written authorization from him, we will work to develop a plan to complete the course requirements.