

SUGGESTED READINGS PRIOR TO LAW SCHOOL
prepared by Prof Sam Jacobson

About the law school experience:

Many good books are available about the law school experience, but some of the discussion, such as the discussion about outlining and taking law school exams, may not be very meaningful until later in the first semester after you have a better understanding of legal analysis. My recommendations include:

Law School Without Fear, by Helene Shapo and Marshall Shapo (Foundation Press 2002). This is a short, easy-to-read book written by two law professors for their son when he was entering law school. The book includes discussion about sources of law, how to brief a case, the use of prior cases (precedent), procedure of civil cases, roles of judge and jury, nature of legal reasoning, policy represented by law, legal writing, how to study for law school, taking law exams, and tips for surviving law school.

One L: The Turbulent True Story of a First Year at Harvard Law School, by Scott Turow (originally published in 1977). While much time has passed since Turow was in law school, not much has changed. In this book, Turow writes about the ubiquitous trials and rewards of the first-year law student experience.

About the practice of law:

A Civil Action, by Jonathan Harr (Vintage 1996). This is a suspenseful true story of a lawsuit by eight leukemia victims against W. P. Grace and Beatrice Foods, seeking damages for a cancer-causing industrial solvent the companies dumped into the water table of Woburn, Massachusetts. This book provides a factual context to the procedure that a lawsuit must follow as it progresses from onset to completion.

A Time to Kill by John Grisham (originally published 1989) (fiction). This was Grisham's first book, and in my opinion, his best writing. A young lawyer in Clanton, Mississippi, defends a black Vietnam war hero who kills the white men who raped his ten-year-old daughter. Grisham creates a vivid picture of the small-town practice of law in the South, while exploring issues of professionalism and morality.

Verdict by Barry C. Reid (originally published in 1980) (fiction). An underdog, alcoholic Boston trial attorney sues a hospital for malpractice on behalf of a woman who is in a persistent vegetative state. A great read, this book is full of courtroom drama while the reader witnesses the remarkable transformation of the attorney, who was memorialized in film by Paul Newman.

About what constitutes law and legal reasoning:

High Albania: A Victorian Traveller's Balkan Odyssey by Edith Durham (originally published in 1909). Durham traveled extensively in Albania near the end of the Turkish occupation of that country. While the government was in disarray, the tribal communities and their informal system of law was not. Of special interest are Durham's observations of the system of "blood" that allowed a person to kill another for certain wrongs. The system of "blood" morphed, much like our system of common law, as it adjusted to changed social conditions or to avoid unfairness.

Law 101: Everything You Need to Know About the American Legal System by Jay M. Feinman (Oxford Univ. Press 2000). While this book may not have the pizzazz of some of the other books in this list, it provides a wonderful overview of most of the subjects that law students will study in their first year, including civil procedure, tort law, contract law, property law, and criminal law. The author also discusses criminal procedure, which will be helpful for understanding criminal law, and constitutional interpretation.

An Introduction to Legal Reasoning by Edward H. Levi (originally published in 1949). This is a classic book on the process of legal reasoning from case law, statutes, and constitutions.

Legal reasoning is also discussed in *Law School Without Fear*.

Additional books are recommended by our library staff. You can find a list of those books at http://www.willamette.edu/wucl/longlib/pre_law_list.html.