

CHOOSING UPPER LEVEL COURSES

In choosing courses in your second, third, and fourth years, you should be keeping in mind and balancing the following goals:

- Making progress toward graduation – This means taking your required courses/credits (Professional Responsibility, Upper Level Writing w/ Research & Citation Workshop, Upper Level Skills, Administrative/Regulatory) as early as you can, and ensuring that the number of credits you take per semester is moving you toward a total of 88 at the right rate.
- Taking courses in the law school “core” – By “core” courses, we mean courses that many lawyers and law teachers would agree are important for becoming a well-rounded lawyer, regardless of a student’s particular area of interest. Such courses include Administrative Law, Corporations, Criminal Procedure, Evidence, Family Law, International Law, and Wills.
- Exploring advanced certificates, Paths to Practice and professional tracks – If you are thinking about particular areas of practice after graduation, then the courses in such areas should be part of your planning, and you should be taking the foundation courses in your chosen area early on. Our current advanced certificate programs are Environmental Law, International Law and Health Law & Policy. Our current Paths to Practice are Business Law (Corporate or Financial Services Compliance tracks), Civil Litigation & Dispute Resolution, Criminal Practice, Real Estate Practice, and Women, Gender & the Law. For details regarding the advanced certificates, Paths to Practice and other professional tracks, visit <https://law.pace.edu/paths-to-practice>.
- Developing the skills of an attorney – Law school is professional school, and the goal at the end of it is to be a gainfully employed professional. In today’s employment environment, developing skills while in school is no longer optional, and you should be considering clinics, externships, and simulations throughout your upper level years.
- Preparing for the Bar Exam – Passing a state bar exam is a prerequisite to practicing as a lawyer, and getting exposure to the subject matter tested on the bar while you are still in law school can make your later preparation easier. So, bar-tested subject matter should be part of your upper level elective mix. A list of bar subjects is available from the Office of Academic Success.
- Challenging yourself and exposing yourself to interesting and important topics – Law school should stretch you intellectually and expand your understanding of the world. Therefore, you should make room in your schedule for courses that are interesting, relevant, and challenging, even if they do not fit one of the other goals described above. For example, you need not be an Environmental Certificate student to benefit from taking the Environmental Law Survey course. So-called perspective courses (e.g., Comparative Criminal Procedure, Feminist Legal Theory, Jurisprudence) are particularly valuable in serving this goal.

With the exception of the first (making progress toward graduation) none of these goals is clearly more important than the others, and none should be pursued at the expense of the others. You should be balancing these goals in making your course selections, and an ideal semester would include courses that support multiple goals. Fortunately, there is significant overlap in the courses that serve the individual goals. For example, Corporations and Evidence are core courses that are tested on the New York Bar Exam and are foundation courses for several Paths to Practice. For more information about balancing the course selection goals described above, speak to your academic advisor or the Academic Dean.