

BECOMING A CIVIL LITIGATOR OR TRIAL LAWYER – ADVICE FOR WAYNE STATE LAW STUDENTS

There are a variety of course offerings, clinics, and extracurricular activities at Wayne State University Law School that can provide a solid base for students interested in pursuing a career as a civil litigator or trial lawyer.

I. Recommended course work:

All the first year courses – Torts, Contracts and Property – and especially, Civil Procedure and Legal Research and Writing, provide an essential foundation for becoming a litigator, so it's important to give these courses your best effort. In addition, the following **courses that emphasize procedure** are recommended, in no particular order:

I. Constitutional Law (A and B)

II. Professional Responsibility

III. Federal Courts

IV. Administrative Law

V. Evidence

VI. Conflict of Laws

VII. Pretrial Advocacy

VIII. Trial Advocacy

IX. Advanced Legal Writing

X. Alternative Dispute Resolution

XI. Negotiation

If you have an idea about your potential area of specialization as a litigator (product liability, plaintiff's personal injury, commercial, intellectual property, as so forth), you will want to choose **substantive courses** in those fields.

You should also consider **seminars**, which give you advanced writing experience and **clinics and internships**, which provide hands-on experiences that can inform your future career goals. Below are a list of recommended seminars and clinic programs.

Clinics, Internships, Skills Courses (not all-inclusive):

- XII. Civil Rights Litigation Clinic**
- XIII. Disability Law Clinic**
- XIV. Criminal Appellate Advocacy (useful for appellate advocacy, even though substantive criminal law)**
- XV. Dispute Resolution Practicum**
- XVI. Free Legal Aid Clinic**
- XVII. Judicial Internship**
- XVIII. Civil Law Internships: ACLU, Legal Aid & Defender Ass'n – Civil, Michigan Attorney General, Michigan Legal Services, Legal Services of Central Michigan, Neighborhood Legal Services Michigan, Sugar Law Center**
- XIX. Law Review**
- XX. Journal of Law in Society**
- XXI. Moot court**

II. Other Advice:

Course selection does not need to drive your career path. You should take courses that you are interested in, but also make sure to build a solid foundation of legal courses. Take advantage of clinic opportunities to meet with and get comfortable with clients and develop trial skills.

- XXII. Take internships that get you into court and let you observe trials and pretrial procedure.**
- XXIII. Work in a law firm doing litigation.**
- XXIV. You can never know too much procedure – it frees you to do your work effectively. The more you understand how to navigate through the legal system, the more effective you can be for your clients.**
- XXV. Take as many courses as you can where you'll get feedback on your writing. You will most likely have to produce something in order to go on the job market, and you will be in a better position to do that if you have spent time on a journal as a**

student. It will expose you to legal academic writing, and also give you a chance to write something yourself.

XXVI. Find professors and other role models who are experienced litigators and take advantage of opportunities to know them better. Take their classes, be a good student, and perhaps try to work as a research assistant or volunteer for a project they are working on. Ask for advice about jobs, career paths, etc. Be proactive in finding areas of overlap in your interests and in offering yourself for research.