

Overview of J.D. Program

Valparaiso Law provides a comprehensive study of the foundations of law, an introduction to its substantive areas, and the opportunity to study areas of specific interest. The curriculum focuses on legal analysis, practical training, perspectives on law, legal research, and legal writing.

First-Year Curriculum

The first-year curriculum, taught in the traditional case method, consists of required courses that introduce students to substantive areas of the law. These core courses are the foundation for upper-level topics and elective courses.

[More about courses and requirements \(including part-time program curriculum\)](#)

[Full course listing](#)

Legal Writing

Students develop legal writing skills during each year of study at Valparaiso Law. The first year emphasizes writing and reasoning, analysis, and persuasion. First-year assignments include office memoranda, client opinion letters, trial and appellate briefs, oral arguments, and a case comment. Second-year courses focus on research and legal drafting in specific practice areas, and reinforce the skills learned in the first year. The third-year curriculum includes seminar offerings that permit students to work in an area of interest while producing a substantial piece of scholarly legal writing as a capstone to their law school career.

Students also have the opportunity to hone their legal writing skills when they serve in the Law Clinic, participate in an externship, conduct independent research for professors, join the Moot Court Society, or serve with the Law Review.

Legal Research

Valparaiso Law is one of the few schools in the country that requires two semesters of legal research in the first year, a curriculum feature that uniquely prepares students to launch and flourish in their legal careers. Students develop skill in using the major legal sources both in print and online and are introduced to regulatory research, legislative history and law practice materials, and cost-effective use of Lexis and Westlaw. They demonstrate research proficiency each semester through regular assignments, a practical exam, and a written final exam. Students may also elect to pursue further research-specific training through advanced legal research courses.

Ethics

Students examine the philosophical and ethical contexts of law and justice, and they are required to take the course "Legal Profession." This course enables

Curriculum & Course of Study - Academics - Valparaiso University School of Law
students to reflect on the role of attorneys, identify their own aspirations, and learn about their future role as officers of the court.

Perspectives

In perspectives courses, students examine the law and the legal system as a whole. This requirement stems from Valparaiso Law's commitment to values-based inquiry, and encourages students to develop a holistic understanding of the law.

Clinical Law Program

Established in 1969, Valparaiso University Law Clinic serves the community and the legal profession. Third-year students represent clients without access to the legal system. Faculty attorneys closely supervise students' representation of clients, promoting development of advocacy, negotiation, and counseling skills.

[More about the Clinical Law program...](#)

Current Representation

Students may also gain practical experience by supporting legal representation provided by faculty members. In this context, students gain the same varied, extensive experience provided to clinic students.

Externships

Externship participants have the opportunity to earn academic credit and gain valuable professional experience while performing legal research; honing legal writing skills; and working closely with attorneys, prosecutors, public defenders, government agencies, legal services, and state and federal judges. Open positions are posted each semester, and students must submit a resume and interview with the prospective extern employer.

[More about Externships...](#)