



Preparation for a Career in Law

Prelaw from a human perspective

Students considering law school can choose any major at Cornell. There is no prelaw curriculum or even a set of required courses for entrance into law school. A major that emphasizes effective communication, vigorous analytical thinking, and logical reasoning provides strong preparation for a legal education and career.

Consider Human Ecology's seven majors:

- Policy Analysis and Management
- Human Development
- Biology and Society
- Human Biology, Health, and Society
- Nutritional Sciences
- Design and Environmental Analysis
- Fiber Science and Apparel Design

There are many ways to use a legal education, and whether as a successful lawyer or public servant you must understand human behavior, be aware of social issues, be able to think clearly, and express verbal and written ideas compellingly—all of which can be learned in the College of Human Ecology. Our seven interdisciplinary majors, based in the natural and social sciences, effectively prepare students to research subjects in depth, analyze information and data, and address human issues from a broad perspective.

Policy Analysis and Management offers strong prelaw preparation by providing students with a robust foundation in economics, government, ethics, and quantitative methods as groundwork for the rigorous logical thought needed in the law profession. Students are offered courses in corporations, shareholders and policy, market regulatory policy, health care policy, insurance and risk, and the regulation of financial institutions. Courses can be combined with studies in business law, communications law, family law, and psychology and the law, leaving students well prepared for the LSAT examination and developing law school applications.

Human Development integrates biology, psychology, sociology, and history to provide a better understanding of human behavior and the life course. Students develop valuable skills for law school by completing extensive research and writing assignments as well as group projects. Courses in adolescent and juvenile behavior, psychology and psychopathology, social and personality development, and adulthood and aging all contribute to an understanding of human behavior.

Biology and Society prepares students to address the complex technical, social, and ethical challenges that arise from the interaction of laboratory science with social and cultural forces. Students develop a theme of study that can focus on legal and ethical issues surrounding the biological sciences.

Human Biology, Health, and Society integrates biology and chemistry with courses in the social sciences so that students can better understand human health issues. Course offerings in nutrition, human development, policy analysis, and design prepare students to consider questions of medical ethics, health care delivery, mental illness, and other topics relating to law and medicine.

College of Human Ecology Law School Acceptances

- Albany Law School
- American University
- Brooklyn Law School
- Columbia University
- Cornell University
- Duke Law School
- Emory Law School
- Fordham University
- George Washington University
- Georgetown Law School
- Harvard University
- New York University
- Tulane University
- University of California–Hastings, Berkeley, and Los Angeles
- University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of Pittsburgh
- University of Virginia
- Vanderbilt Law School
- Washington University St. Louis
- Yale University
- Yeshiva University Cardozo School of Law

Selected Graduates

Assistant county attorney (Policy Analysis and Management)

Miami–Dade County; Miami, Florida

Assistant general counsel (Human Development)

Pfizer; Morris Plains, New Jersey

Assistant prosecutor (Biology and Society)

Jersey City, New Jersey

Attorney (Design and Environmental Analysis)

Brown & Wood; New York, New York

Counsel for Claims and Risk Management (Policy Analysis and Management)

United Educators Insurance; Chevy Chase, Maryland

Litigation associate (Human Development)

Davis & Gilbert LLP; New York, New York

Real estate attorney and partner (Human Development)

Certilman Balin Adler & Hyman LLP; East Meadow, New York

Senior attorney (Nutritional Sciences)

American Home Products Corporation; Madison, Wisconsin

Senior counsel (Human Development)

Kinetics Group; Santa Clara, California

Senior trial counsel (Human Biology, Health and Society)

New York City Law Department; New York, New York

Trademark counsel (Policy Analysis and Management)

Turner Broadcasting System; Atlanta, Georgia

Nutritional Sciences combines biology, chemistry, and human nutrition courses to examine such issues as diet and disease, community and public health, and international nutrition, health, and public policy. The process of interpreting research from the laboratory or the field and applying it to societal issues and government policies further strengthens students' analytical skills and their understanding of the relationship between science and law.

Design and Environmental Analysis focuses on planning, designing, and managing interior environments that ensure human safety, productivity, and welfare. Students gain knowledge necessary to advocate for regulations and safety concerns relating to interior environments, including private and public housing and large commercial institutions.

Fiber Science and Apparel Design offers three distinct programs of study in apparel design, fashion design management, and fiber science. Students learn to analyze problems and find creative solutions to areas such as apparel manufacturing and labor management, branding and licensing, product safety and liability, and consumer information programs.

Planning for Law School

Prelaw students have access to a pre-law adviser in the College of Human Ecology's Office of Student and Career Development, who will assist with personal statements, recommendations, timetables for admission, advice about the LSAT, and choosing a law school. The Cornell Legal Careers Guide, published by Cornell Career Services (CCS), provides valuable information on preparing and applying for law school. CCS also arranges individual and group sessions to review the application process, including the LSAT tests and Credential Assembly Service (CAS), letters of recommendation, the dean's letter, personal statements, choosing a school, and the timetable to follow. A session on how to update the law school application to enhance credentials if students are wait-listed is also offered. A university-sponsored Law School Day, similar to a college fair, is offered annually on campus.

Of the recent Human Ecology graduates who went directly to an advanced

degree program, about 22 percent enrolled in law school, and many others applied to law school after a few years of employment. In recent years, Cornell's 88 percent admittance rate to law school has been significantly higher than the national average.

Field Study

One of the best ways to test an interest in law is to gain experience through internships in such places as corporate law firms, public agencies, or communications companies.

Cornell offers three internship-based programs that students may consider to gain exposure to the legal profession. The Capital Semester program in Albany, New York, combines a semester of 12 Cornell University credits with a five-day-a-week paid internship with a New York State legislator. Students complete research projects, meet with lobbyists and constituents, write reports for legislation and publication, and work on legislative hearings.

Human Ecology's Urban Semester program in New York City offers students an in-depth look at the relationship between a multicultural society and professional, community, and public policy issues. Students work three days a week in an internship and provide community service through a variety of service opportunities. Internships related to private and public law have included NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, Agenda for Children Tomorrow, Skadden Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, Lawyers for Children, the District Attorney's office, Legal Aid Society, Center for Immigrant Rights, and the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence.

Cornell in Washington is an off-campus program in Washington, D.C. that provides students the opportunity to take small classes taught by Cornell faculty while working in an externship with top agencies, businesses, or associations. Possible externships related to law include the American Bar Association, American Civil Liberties Union, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Department of Justice, Environmental Law Institute, Federal Trade Commission, the United States Supreme Court, and numerous law firms.

Students can also study abroad worldwide—in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin

America, or Oceania (Australia and New Zealand)—to enhance their global understanding and career potential.

Elective Classes

Human Ecology majors are very flexible and allow students to complete nearly one-third of their curriculum in elective classes. Numerous courses taught across campus offer students diverse perspectives on legal issues.

- Arbitration
- Business and Hospitality Law
- Business Law
- Children and the Law
- Communication Law
- Death Penalty in America
- Economics and the Law
- Economics of Consumer Law and Protection
- Employment Discrimination Law and Union Management Relations
- Environmental Law
- Estate Planning
- Ethnoracial Identity in Anthropology, Language, and Law
- Historic Preservation Law
- Insurance Law
- International Law
- Labor and Employment Law
- Law, Crime, and Society in Early Modern Europe
- Law of the Internet and e-Commerce
- Memory and the Law
- Nature, Functions, and Limits of Law
- Prisons
- Psychology and Law
- Real Estate Law
- Resource Management and Environmental Law
- Social Policy Planning

In addition to pursuing elective courses to further develop interests and exposure to the law, students can pursue the Law and Society minor. Through course work and various events, students examine a focused study of the relationship between legal institutions and historical and contemporary societies. The Law and Society minor, administered by the Program on Ethics and Public Life (EPL), is open to all undergraduates regardless of their intent to pursue a law career.

Extracurricular Opportunities

Cornell students are encouraged to

take advantage of the more than 800 clubs, activities, and organizations on campus. Students can join PLUS (Human Ecology's Prelaw Undergraduate Society), Societas, Minority Undergraduate Law Society, William E. McKnight Moot Court, and the Cornell Pre-Law Journal. PLUS offers talks with the associate director of admissions of Cornell Law School, tips for successful LSATs and applications, steps to arrange an internship, and programs that sustain a dialogue on contemporary legal issues.

Why Human Ecology?

Human Ecology offers an interdisciplinary, contemporary, and applied approach to learning through undergraduate majors that will broaden your perspective and understanding of human behavior. Students enhance their writing skills and learn to conduct research, problem solve, and analyze complex human issues. Human Ecology's faculty members will challenge you to think critically and draw upon theoretical frameworks and research-based knowledge to understand the biological, economic, psychological, and environmental factors affecting people's lives. Undoubtedly, as a future lawyer you will rely heavily on the research methods, writing skills, communication strategies, and knowledge you gain in the College of Human Ecology to meet the needs of those you serve.

Alumni Profiles

Justice Leah Ward Sears '76

Emory University (JD); University of Virginia School of Law (LLM)
Partner—Schiff Hardin LLP, Atlanta, Georgia

Currently a partner at Schiff Hardin LLP with the Litigation Group, Justice Leah Ward Sears previously sat on the Georgia Supreme Court. When she was appointed by the governor in 1992

to fill an unexpired term, she became the first woman and the youngest person ever to serve on that court. When she ran later that year to retain her seat, she became the first woman ever to win a contested statewide election in Georgia. Before assuming that position,



she was a trial judge on the Superior Court of Fulton County, Georgia, as well as a judge on the Atlanta city court and a practicing attorney with Alston & Bird, one of Atlanta's largest law firms.

As chief justice, Sears initiated two key initiatives: the Georgia Supreme Court's Committee on Civil Justice and the Commission on Children, Marriage, and Family Law. Justice Sears is highly interested in issues concerning marriage, divorce, and family and the impact on children, with an ultimate goal of helping families avoid the criminal justice system.

Justice Sears came to Cornell, in part because it was an Ivy League school that embraced diversity, as well as to pursue the Human Development major. She found the university and the college to be supportive of free expression of all kinds. "I loved being at Cornell and being part of Human Ecology. I also valued the support I received from Africana Studies and Ujamaa." It was, for her, a wonderfully expansive experience.

David Reichenberg '03

Fordham Law School, 2006
Associate—Wilson Sonsini Goodrich and Rosati P.C., New York, New York

A Policy Analysis and Management major, David came to the College of Human Ecology to examine his many interests. "I had interests in written and oral advocacy, as well as entrepreneurship, economics, and how businesses built and sustained their competitive advantages. One



of the primary reasons I was drawn to the Policy Analysis and Management major was because it afforded me the flexibility to explore all of these areas." Through course work, the Urban Semester, and research, David found a way to meld his interests and is now practicing antitrust law.

"Classes in economics and econometrics introduced me to the application of economic theory in a legal context and to antitrust law, where economics plays a primary role in the outcome of each case. My training in economics gives me the tools necessary to take part

in this complex conversation, and to develop creative ways to best represent my clients.”

Advocacy and business classes, as well as the researching, writing, and defending of an honors thesis further informed David’s legal interest, and he found that his “heart was in legal analysis and advocacy, and I had discovered an area of the law that would also allow me to integrate my interests in economics and competition.”

David’s Urban Semester experience enabled him to further test his interests through an internship at a top corporate law firm. There he discovered what he was looking for in a legal working environment—“diversity, tireless commitment to the clients, and the existence of a ‘meritocracy.’”

In addition, David says, “I have always felt an obligation to do pro bono work to benefit society—a concept that reflects the College of Human Ecology’s mission.” This work has taken the form of his first case through the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. He and his colleagues are working on a case involving an asylum applicant who had come to the United States because of threats to his life in his home country resulting from work the applicant had done to assist the U.S. government in convicting a drug kingpin.

MaryAnn Totino ’04

Harvard Law School, 2007
Attorney—Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP
New York, New York

Intent on pursuing research and taking a variety of classes, MaryAnn found the Human Development major most interesting. “Classes that focused on behavioral psychology greatly helped me understand that there are multiple layers underlying every situation. One of the most important things about law school is realizing that there is no correct answer to many of the problems.”



MaryAnn’s interests were also impacted by her research. Work in Professor Cynthia Hazan’s attachment lab as part

of MaryAnn’s honor’s thesis “helped me make the connection between Human Development and the law, [as] I looked at the effects of personality on eyewitness identification and ran my own research experiment.” An internship at the Nassau County District Attorney’s office during her Cornell career reinforced this connection.

MaryAnn is currently working for a large law firm, where she has been able to fine tune her research and writing skills and learn from her colleagues. She plans to move into government practice and become a federal prosecutor to satisfy her long-standing goal to be in the courtroom.

Her interests in human behavior and the decisions people make have fostered an interest in criminal practice, prosecution in particular. “Criminal law is the most interesting to me because of the [importance] of psychology and tactics (i.e., understanding the jury, developing a theory of the case from the facts given, interacting with witnesses and cooperators).”

A part-time externship through her firm allows MaryAnn to practice criminal defense for indigent defendants at the Legal Aid Society. She also “participates in a great deal of pro bono work at the firm, especially in the area of immigration law, which has been a rewarding experience.”

Aneela Haider ’04

Santa Clara University School of Law
Santa Clara, California

Interested in studying a variety of courses such as management, marketing, economics, and research analysis, Aneela found a blend of these interests in the College of Human Ecology, specifically as a Policy Analysis and Management major.



“The College of Human Ecology prepares its students well for a dynamic career in any field of choice and the challenging course work prepared me well for the rigors of law school. More importantly, faculty at the College of Human Ecology always had an open-door policy, which made me accustomed to attending faculty office

hours—a practice that is serving me well in law school.”

Aneela’s interest in law was sparked by a law and economics course, and with an interest in corporate law, she hopes to work as a corporate transaction attorney. She is particularly interested in technology licensing, mergers and acquisitions, securities laws, taxation, etc., because of the nuanced nature of the work and the rapidly changing technological landscape.

“The Career Exploration Center at the College of Human Ecology is also excellent, as I learned how to network, approach alumni or other professors to seek contacts, and conduct smart job searches that helped me gain firsthand legal experience before law school (I interned at the United States Department of Justice, in the Civil Rights Department, while I was at Cornell, and worked at a law firm after I graduated from Cornell).”

Aneela was very involved in her local community after graduating from Cornell and continues that involvement in law school through volunteer work for a local pro bono advocacy group for the homeless in San Francisco. “This experience showed me that the study of law has great potential to touch human lives, and improve someone’s situation through advocacy.” She hopes to continue to use her legal education to help those who cannot afford attorneys though pro bono service and to conduct research on legal issues.

For More Information

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