

# Prelaw Advising

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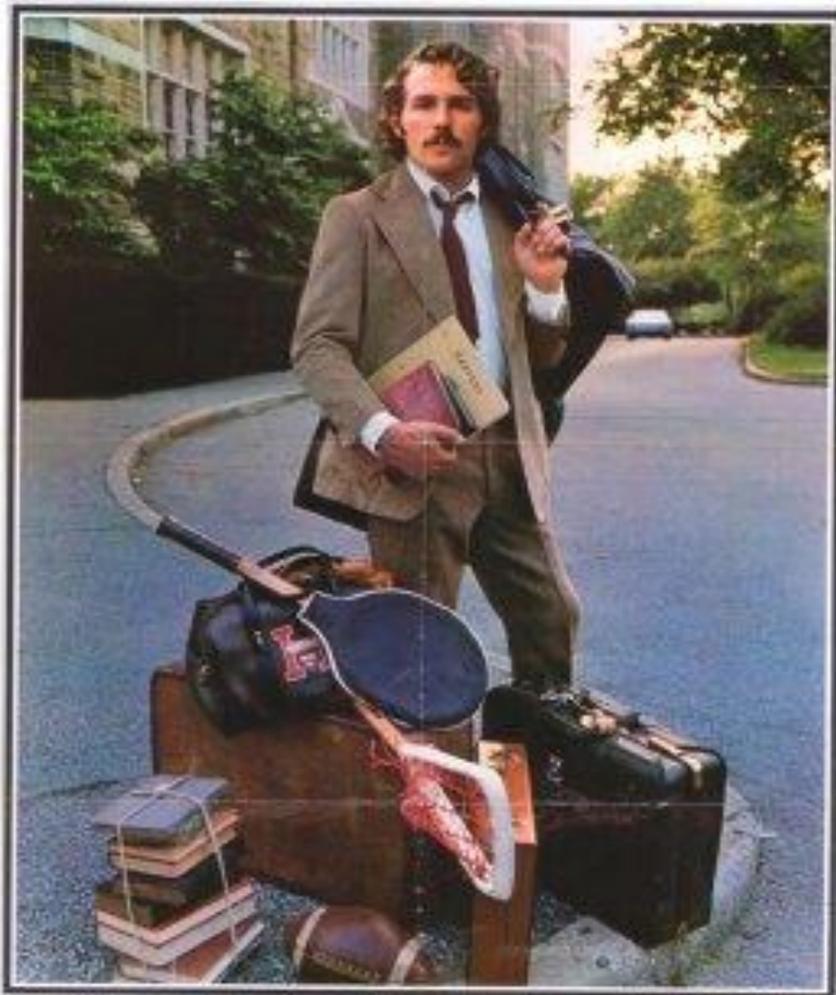
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# The Paper Chase

You may be looking at  
a future President, Supreme Court Justice,  
Secretary of State or  
a dropout.



With Extras For Parents: TIMOTHY BOTTOMS • LINDSAY WAGNER • JOHN HOUSEMAN  
A 20th Century Fox Production "THE PAPER CHASE" Directed by ROBERT C. THOMPSON and RODRICK PAUL  
Produced by JAMES BRIDGES Screenplay by JAMES BRIDGES Story by JOHN JAY OSBORN, JR.  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN WILLIAMS COSTUME DESIGNER

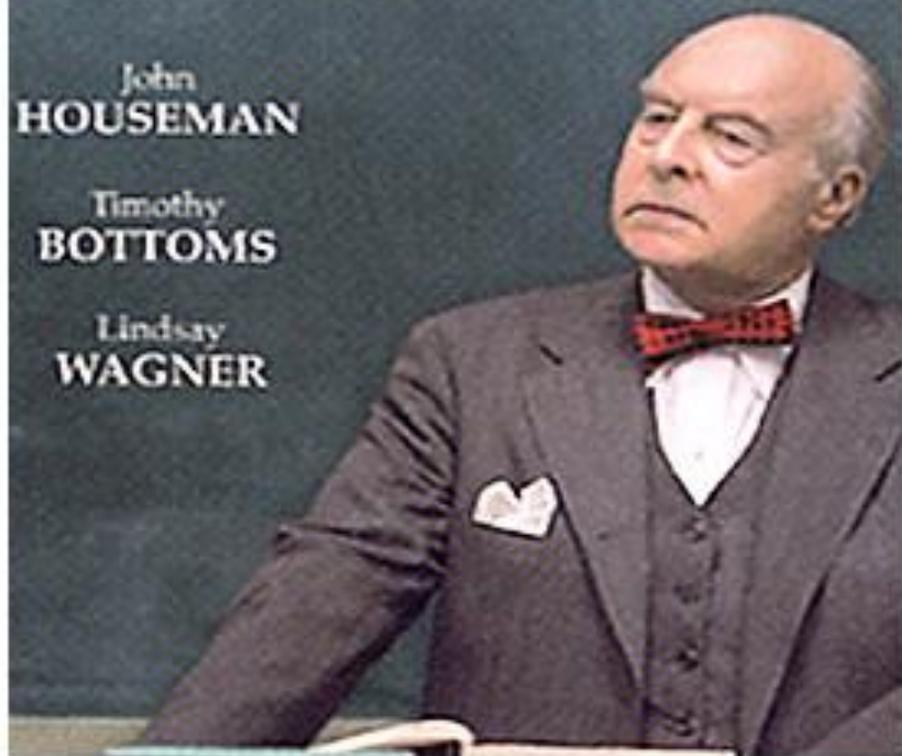
# THE PAPER CHASE



John  
HOUSEMAN

Timothy  
BOTTOMS

Lindsay  
WAGNER



# My experience.

- Stressful, exciting, rigorous
- Inherently competitive
- Unique experiences: Internship, study abroad, law firm summer associate, law review
- Post law school: Bar exam, federal clerkship, FBI Agent, more grad school, academia
- Suggestions: Perspective, balance, open mind

# Initial Questions

- **Should I go to law school?** Maybe. See below.
- **Do I have to be a brilliant legal scholar to go to law school?**
  - No, but you have to be good at reading/writing and you have to work hard.
- **Will I be rich if I become a lawyer?**
  - Maybe, but probably not—though law school can open up many satisfying career fields.
- **Why shouldn't I go to law school?**
  - You don't like to read and write.
  - You're not willing to work hard.
  - You're not willing to make the financial investment.
  - You're not interested in law.

# History and Modernization of Law Schools

- Initially, legal training was based upon apprenticeships. Changes in Harvard's legal training in 1870s had a lasting impact on law schools.
- More difficult entrance requirements/exams: **Law School Admission Test (LSAT)**
- Case method of teaching: **"Socratic method"**
  - In place of lectures and textbooks, casebooks were used (collections of actual case reports).
  - Teachers used the Socratic method to guide students to a discovery of legal concepts found in the case.

# The Nature of Legal Education

- Case method
- Socratic method
- Educational goals:
  - Educate law students as *generalists*
  - Teach them to *think like lawyers*:
    - Analysis of cases
    - Reasoning by example – applying previous cases to present cases

# Typical First Year (1L) Courses

- Contracts
- Torts
- Property
- Civil procedure
- Criminal law / procedure
- Constitutional law
- Legal research and writing

# Second (2L) and Third (3L) Courses

During these years, one typically has the opportunity to take a wide variety course and may hone in on a particular area. For example:

- Litigation (trial practice, etc.)
- Business Associations, Commercial Law, etc.
- Estate Planning (Wills and Trusts, etc.)
- Tax Law
- National Security Law, International Law
- Family Law
- Intellectual Property
- Legal philosophy, etc.

# Places where lawyers work

- Private law firms
- Government attorneys
- Any job requiring strong analytical skills, even if a law degree isn't required:
  - Government agencies (e.g., FBI, CIA, State Department)
  - Nonprofits / policy work
  - Business (in-house counsel)

# Growth and Stratification of Private Firms

Elite law firms: Basic pattern of getting a job at a NYC Wall Street firm like Cravath, Swaine & Moore:

- Phi Beta Kappa, and editor of the *Law Review* at Harvard, Yale, or Columbia law school.
- Summer internship (law school) at firm, and then hired as an associate directly out of law school (after judicial clerkship) doing general work for partners.
- Specialization as associate and then evaluated to become partner in firm after 7-10 years.

This is the traditional path to “elite” law firms, but it is not the only path. Moreover, keep in mind the many other career opportunities that a law degree may provide.

# Government Attorneys in the Judicial Process

- Federal Prosecutors
- State Prosecutors
- Public Defenders
- Law clerks (typically a short-term post)

# Private Lawyers in the Judicial Process

- Assigned defense counsel
- Private defense counsel
- Legal services for the poor

# Other Opportunities

- Government agencies (e.g., FBI, CIA, State Department)
  - For example, I attended law school for the sole reason of making myself competitive in the FBI Special Agent application process.
  - This worked for me, but I knew that my law degree would open doors in other fields if I didn't get into the FBI.
  - Keep an open mind about career fields/opportunities.
- Nonprofits / policy work
- Business (in-house counsel)

If all this sounds OK so far, then what should you do to get into law school?

# Take college courses that develop your analytical skills.

- The LSAT includes 3 types of questions
  - Reading Comprehension
  - Analytical Reasoning
  - Logical Reasoning
- What courses develop those skills?
- Virtually any course that requires you to read extensively, to think logically, critically, and analytically, and to share your thoughts and ideas in both written and spoken English, will help you in this regard.

# Begin the law school application process early

- If you would like to attend law school immediately after graduating from college, then you should begin preparing by the ***spring semester of your junior year***.
- You should aim to take the ***LSAT*** during the summer before your senior year (June), or in September/October of your senior year.
- Your applications should be submitted ***before Thanksgiving*** of your senior year.
- However, consider taking a ***year off*** between college and law school.

# Get familiar with the application process.

- (1) Go to [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org) to learn about the application process and get free LSAT prep materials. Create an LSAC account.
- (2) Register and prepare for the LSAT.
- (3) Research law schools: Rank? Geography? Cost?
- (4) Pay for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS); see [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org)
- (5) Request all required transcripts (sent directly from institution to LSAC)
- (6) Request letters of recommendation (submitted through LSAC)
- (7) Apply to law schools online through LSAC

# Focus on the LSAT

- Decide when you want to take the LSAT and then give yourself **4 months** to study.
- Treat it like a college course: Follow a disciplined schedule of studying several hours per week, with an emphasis on **timed practice exams** (and go over explanations for all questions you get wrong).
- **Get help:**
  - Purchase study materials on amazon
  - Enroll in an in-person prep course
  - Enroll in an online prep course
  - RU offers an award to fund prep courses

# Personal Statements

- These vary slightly by law school (word count, question prompt, etc.), but they're generally designed to elicit the following from you:
  - ***Who are you? What is something that's interesting/unique about you and your life experiences? Tell your story.***
  - ***How might the above relate to your desire to attend law school? Connect your story to your goal of attending law school.***
- Outline your personal statement, ensuring that it is organized and it flows.
- Write multiple drafts, ask professors to read/comment, and then revise.

# Summary Questions

- **Should I go to law school?** Maybe. See below.
- **Do I have to be a brilliant legal scholar to go to law school?**
  - No, but you have to be good at reading/writing and you have to work hard.
- **Will I be rich if I become a lawyer?**
  - Maybe, but probably not—though law school can open up many satisfying career fields.
- **Why shouldn't I go to law school?**
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# Questions?

- Write down at least two questions.
- Then discuss them with a partner.