



## Foundations of Practice

All students at Mitchell Hamline take a required course on the role of lawyers and professional identity development in the legal profession.

The course, named *Foundations of Practice*, is designed to assist students with the important work of constructing their professional identities leading to a more in-depth understanding of the important work of lawyers, greater career satisfaction, improved law student and lawyer health and wellness, and increasingly thoughtful perceptions about the law student's role in the legal profession.

*Foundations of Practice* introduces and explores the professional competencies and characteristics that lead to a satisfying and successful professional career. Building upon the recent work of the [Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System](#) and the [National Taskforce on Lawyer Wellbeing](#), the course will help students identify the skills, experiences, and individual values they bring to their work as lawyers in the profession.

Students will gain an understanding of the importance of an attorney's reputation, health and wellness, and professional and ethical judgment in an increasingly challenging and demanding market. Students will also be exposed to the continually changing nature of the legal profession and their responsibility as members of the profession to advance their individual and collective skills and expertise in ways that meet the needs of an increasingly diverse client population.

Lawyers, judges, and other legal professionals are invited into our in-person and virtual classrooms to enrich discussion, infuse practice-oriented perspectives into our learning, and share their career progression and professional development experiences with students. Students also participate in off-campus experiences that introduce them to the work of lawyers inside of law firms, companies, non-profits, and judicial settings.

*Foundations of Practice* also includes a mentoring component that pairs each student with a practitioner working in the student's area of interest. The mentor and student will work together to explore the work of the mentor and the student's interest generally in the legal profession. Mentors offer insight into their career paths and offer suggestions to students as they begin to explore their own and seek early opportunities to gain legal experience. Mentors introduce students to various aspects of the legal profession through an informational interview and attending a professional event with the student.

For more information on *Foundations of Practice*, please contact Associate Professor and Dean of Career and Professional Development Leanne Fuith ([leanne.fuith@mitchellhamline.edu](mailto:leanne.fuith@mitchellhamline.edu)). Thank you for your support of this course and our Mitchell Hamline community.

## **Course Outline: Foundations of Practice**

### **Professionalism and Professional Identity**

Students will be introduced to the concepts of lawyer professionalism and professional identity, including the importance of demonstrating civility and respect for others and the profession overall and identifying and internalizing individual principles and values that will guide their actions as a lawyer. How can following these principles lead to health, success and satisfaction in the law?

### **Leveraging Individual Strengths**

Using the strengths assessment administered in the fall semester, students will evaluate their strengths as they reflect on their career path beyond law school. What type of work, organizational settings, and practice areas best build on their inherent strengths and the knowledge, skills and experience they already bring to the profession? How can they apply an understanding of those strengths to make choices that serve the interests of their employers, selves and clients?

### **Exploring the Legal Profession**

Students will gain an understanding of the role of a legal professional inside of a company, law firm, government entity or non-profit, organizational structures and the myths and realities of legal work in each context. Students will also begin thinking about their plans to gain legal experience during and after their first year.

### **Mental Health and Addiction in the Profession**

Students will be exposed to the challenges facing the legal profession with mental health and addiction among law students and lawyers. Students will learn how to recognize mental health and addiction issues and learn strategies for caring for and seeking help for themselves and others.

### **Decision-Making and Resilience**

Students will gain an understanding of the effects of stress on the law student and the lawyer and learn practical strategies for managing stress, preparing for and making difficult decisions and recovering from setbacks.

### **Civility, Professional Judgment, and Ethics**

Students will be exposed to difficult situations that lawyers and law students encounter with clients, colleagues, opposing counsel, and others and work together to resolve those situations in a way that is ethical, civil, and respectful.

### **Working Collaboratively: Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Relationships, and Empathetic Listening (Part I)**

Building upon the Hiring the Whole Lawyer and Foundations for Practice studies by IAALS, students will study the importance of developing skills that enable them to connect with clients, colleagues, and opposing counsel on levels that go beyond analysis of the law and understand how the skills of listening, understanding, and working collaboratively are critical to a lawyer's success.

### **Working Collaboratively: Leadership, Problem Solving, and Teamwork (Part II)**

In part two, students will advance their study of collaborative working skills and practice strategies for problem-solving and working in and leading teams to serve client needs.

**The Changing Legal Landscape**

Students will be exposed to emerging issues in the law including how technology, new legal practice models and other market trends are changing the role of the lawyer and the way we interact with and serve clients. Students will also gain an understanding of the nontraditional skills that lawyers need to have to be successful in this changing context.

**Cross-Cultural Awareness in the Profession**

Students will be introduced to critical issues surrounding diversity in the profession, what diversity looks like, the industry's need to create more diverse and inclusive workplaces, at firms and companies, and what the profession needs to do to effect such a change.

**Access to Justice**

Students will gain an understanding of the importance of engagement with the community and using the law to serve justice through a pro bono lawyering activity.

**Building Your Professional and Ethical Brand**

Building on the earlier instruction about professional identity formation and strengths assessment, students will learn how to develop and manage their own professional and ethical brand and reputation and how their daily decisions and interactions with others as law students and lawyers influences their brand.

**Preparing for Your First Summer**

Students will learn about expectations they are likely to encounter in their first legal work experience including working with partners and judges, tracking time, communicating professionally (orally and in writing) and in the professional conduct that is required of law students in the practice context.