

What's the best major for pre-law students?

Classics and policy studies majors score the best on the LSAT, and philosophy majors have the best chance of getting into law school **BY MIKE STETZ**

In scientia opportunitas. ...

That's Latin for, "If you want to do 'The Paper Chase' thing, get a move on and take a course in the classics."

Actually, it means "in knowledge there is opportunity."

So know this: Classics majors had the best GPA and LSAT scores of 2013 law school applicants, according to a recent study.

So if you want to go to law school ...

Well, before you go rushing off to take a course in classical mythology, the study's author — Derek Muller, an associate professor at Pepperdine University School of Law — notes he couldn't determine causation by the scores alone.

He crunched data from the Law School Admissions Council to determine which law school applicants had the highest grade point averages and LSAT scores broken down by their majors.

The analysis is aptly titled *The Best Prospective Law Students Read Homer*.

"I decided to do [the study] because I'd seen data for LSAT scores for applicants sorted by major in the past, and I thought I'd get an up-to-date version," Muller said. "I also thought it would be interesting to obtain GPA data for majors too, and also to find matriculants as well as applicant data."

As noted, the classics — the study of Ancient Greece and Rome — won. Students majoring in that had GPAs of 3.477 and LSAT scores of 159.8. Policy study majors also did well with GPAs of 3.435 and LSAT scores of 158.8.

The worst? Oh, the injustice. That



ANASTASIOS71/SHUTTERSTOCK

would be criminal justice majors.

"More rigorous majors, like economics, philosophy and math, do better," Muller said. "At the same time, there is a self-selection issue — some people who do well in business or biology probably are doing other things, like working in business or going to medical school, and so we would expect the majors remaining who took the LSAT to score lower. These are all guesses based on observations."

Muller said the data raise more questions than answers.

"For instance, it's probably the case that individuals at more elite undergraduate institutions are selecting more elite majors, like classics, policy studies and art history," Muller said. "And these students at elite

undergraduate institutions are probably of higher intelligence, and so they're doing well on the LSAT."

One person not surprised by the results is Adam Blistein, executive director of the Society for Classical Studies. Classics graduates do well in a number of professions, including law, because of demands of the discipline, he said.

"Our students end up learning how to read very closely and write very carefully," he said. "A lot of work goes into reading ancient text and there's a high premium on writing about what you read."

This is not the first study to show classics majors perform well. High school students who study the classics perform better on the SAT, particularly on the

Major	LSAT	UGPA
Classics	159.8	3.477
Policy Studies	158.8	3.435
International Relations	157.3	3.382
Art History	157.1	3.453
Mathematics	157	3.332
Philosophy	156.8	3.308
International Studies	156.6	3.421
Government/Service	156.3	3.352
Economics	156.2	3.307
Biology, Specialization	155.8	3.217
Music	155.6	3.432
History	155.4	3.339
Mechanical Engineering	155	3.192
Anthropology	154.7	3.365
Religion/Religious Studies	154.6	3.434
Foreign Languages	154.4	3.379
Literature	153.6	3.284
English	153.2	3.307
Environmental Sciences	152.7	3.255
Political Science	152.3	3.274
Chemistry, General	152.1	3.267
Interdisciplinary Studies	151.9	3.235
Spanish	151.9	3.394

Major	LSAT	UGPA
Electrical Engineering	151.8	3.196
Arts & Humanities - Other	151.7	3.275
Finance	151.7	3.297
Journalism	151.5	3.315
Business & Management - Other	151.1	3.171
Psychology	150.6	3.226
International Business	150.5	3.266
Biology, General	149.7	3.096
Communications	149.3	3.213
Social Sciences - Other	148.4	3.168
Accounting	148.3	3.283
Criminology	148.2	3.206
Liberal Arts	148.1	3.113
Sociology	148	3.165
Marketing	147.9	3.14
Law	147.6	3.256
Pre-Law	147.1	3.172
Business Management	146.7	3.142
Business Administration	146.6	3.098
Business Mgmt./Admin.	145.8	3.052
Any Area Not Listed - Other	145	3.122
Social Work	143.4	3.257
Criminal Justice	143.1	3.144

Examine the evidence.



#1

in trial advocacy
for the 2015
U.S. News rankings;
16 times and counting



#1

alumni bar passage
rate on the July 2013
and February 2014
Florida bar exam



#6

in legal writing
for the
2015 *U.S. News*
rankings



450+

clinic and internship
openings each year,
at least one for every
eligible student



33K+

more than 33,000
public service hours
donated by Stetson
students in 2012-13

Earn your law degree from the nation's top law school
for legal skills, located in beautiful Tampa Bay, Florida.

Contact Stetson today at 727-562-7802 or stetson.edu/law.

**STETSON
UNIVERSITY**

College of Law

verbal component, he said.

Like many of the humanities, classics is on the receiving end of jokes about the worth of such an education, he acknowledged. But students have gone on to a number of fields, including work with the National Security Agency.

Classics majors are good in intelligence, he said.

And they make good lawyers, said Benjamin Acosta-Hughes, chair of the classics department at The Ohio State University.

"They are very good at analytical thinking," he said.

That's because students are taking ancient text and interpreting it for a modern audience, he said. It's similar to lawyers interpreting legal documents, he said.

"It's good training," he said.

While those majoring in classics had some of the highest scores to get into law school, they weren't part of a later analysis by Muller to see which majors matriculated highest. The classics numbers were too low to meet the threshold.

In that area, philosophy majors did the best, with nearly 75 percent getting

accepted, even though they were ninth in LSAT scores.

That's something to ponder.

And even though religion/religious studies majors had higher GPAs than philosophy majors and a similar LSAT score, they matriculated only at a 65 percent rate. Could it be, as Nietzsche said, "God is dead."

Pre-law majors didn't exactly rock the study. They matriculated into law school at a 61 percent rate and had GPAs of 3.304 and LSAT scores of 151.3. Spanish majors did better, matriculating at a 70 percent rate.

"For pre-law majors, this is something of a guess, but it may be that the major is not terribly rigorous," Muller said. "It is often associated with criminal justice courses, which don't appear to be overly rigorous. And it might be that students too narrow in their focus actually fare poorly — that is, the more well-rounded student who takes more rigorous classes does better."

Lo tengo. (Got it.)

As for the difference in religion and philosophy majors, he can only guess, he said.

"It might be the case that religion majors who take the LSAT are more inclined to enter other fields (for example, ministry work or divinity school) even after taking the LSAT, and that philosophy majors are more inclined to push ahead with law school rather than pursue alternative fields," he said. "But I don't know. The number of pure religion majors is so much smaller than philosophy majors that the difference might be an aberration."

For students wanting to get to law school, the best course of action would be to take tough courses — regardless of the major, he said. *Zombies in Popular Media*, offered at Columbia College? That might be a risk.

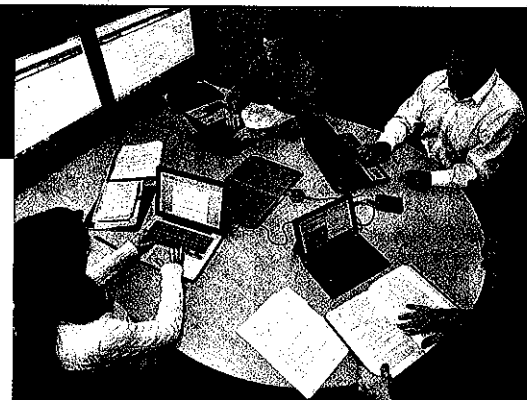
"It would be a good idea for undergraduate students to take rigorous classes, regardless of whether it's in classics or elsewhere," Muller said. "Courses in hard sciences and formal logic are those types of courses. The LSAT evaluates success in reading comprehension, logic and the ability to distinguish between objectively correct and incorrect answers given a set of data. That's the kind of training undergrads need."

**U UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL OF LAW DARTMOUTH**

You deserve an outstanding Law School experience

UMASS LAW PART-TIME PROGRAM ADVANTAGES

- ▶ Part-time evening program comprises two weeknights and Saturday mornings
- ▶ Evening cocurricular and extra-curricular activities
- ▶ Academic support services available on Saturdays
- ▶ Flexible pro bono and clinic placements
- ▶ Convenient Career Service and Registrar office hours
- ▶ Move between the full-time program and the part-time day or evening programs



UMass Law offers
you options: full-time
and part-time day or
evening programs.

For more information:

UMass Law
333 Faunce Corner Road
Dartmouth, MA 02747