

UCLA
SCHOOL OF LAW
**EMPHASIZES AN
INTERDISCIPLINARY
APPROACH**

by Anne Greco

THE STUDY OF A SINGLE SUBJECT CAN NEVER BE CONFINED. This concept especially holds true for the study of law which by its very nature must intersect with other disciplines, whether they be the hard sciences, the humanities, or the social sciences.

In recent years, the legal profession—judges, practicing attorneys and government lawyers—has realized that complex legal questions cannot be answered solely by reference to precedent. Instead, the insights of other disciplines must be employed. UCLA School of Law recognizes the importance of interdisciplinary studies and conducts research, designs programs, and offers classes to facilitate the inevitable expansion of this approach.

Scholars Incorporate Many Schools of Thought

The interdisciplinary study of business and law has long been intertwined, but UCLA's Business Law faculty reach even further to incorporate studies of behavioral economics, sociology, history, empirical research, and psychology into their nationally recognized scholarship. For example, Professor Lynn Stout is working with Vanderbilt economist Margaret Blair to develop a new theory of the corporation that recognizes that successful businesses need not only financial capital from creditors and shareholders, but human capital from executives and employees. This "team production" approach warns against running companies with the myopic goal of simply maximizing today's share price. Professor Stout has another interdisciplinary research project that uses psychology and behavioral economics to explore how trust and trustworthiness play a role in the business world. For example, she recently spoke to the Financial Management Association on the role of investor trust in stock markets.

Similarly, Professor Stephen Bainbridge is also challenging the dominant theory of the corporation, although it is his contention that the board of directors ultimately runs the show. He combines behavioral research with new institutional economics to better understand group decision-making and, subsequently, the role of the board of directors.

While the Business Law Program's scholarship may be pushing new boundaries and reaching out to incorporate other disciplines, Professor Bainbridge is quick to point out that "theory divorced from practice is no help. Our work may be theoretical in nature, but it is grounded in an appreciation of doctrine and practice, so it is accessible to judges and lawyers." For example, he recently wrote a paper on the role business and legal ethics played in Enron, WorldCom, and other recent corporate governance scandals, which integrated doctrine with both traditional rational choice theory and the new behavioral economics.

This concept is also illustrated by the well-known work of Security Pacific Bank Professor of Law Lynn LoPucki, who not only developed the largest big-case, bankruptcy research database currently in existence, but made a version of it open to the public in order to encourage research of all kinds. His database, available at <http://lopucki.law.ucla.edu>, provides seventeen fields of data on each of the 683 bankruptcy cases filed by large, public companies since 1980. LoPucki believes that UCLA's support of empirical research is unique among law schools. "While many top law schools claim to support empiricism, UCLA is the only school I know of that provides a first-rate statistician



Professor Lynn Stout incorporates interdisciplinary thought in her research on Business Law.

to help faculty with statistical analysis and collaborate with them on projects.”

Joseph Doherty is that first-rate statistician and his contributions to the law school have been paramount to the law school’s ability to bring new insights to bear on empirically-driven studies. The Empirical Research Group (ERG), developed by Professor Rick Sander in 1999, provides UCLA School of Law with unheard-of institutional support to conduct empirical research. As Doherty explains, “The typical law school research center is subject-oriented, so if empirical research is required, an expert in research design and statistical analysis must be found. That person is typically working on his own research, however, and may not have the time to dedicate to someone else’s research agenda. I’m here solely to assist professors with their empirical studies.”

Indeed, the law school’s need for statistical analysis was greater than anyone knew. To date, Doherty has helped over thirty-four professors with empirical research on a variety of topics. He recently conducted a complex research project which evaluated the impact of self-help legal centers on the courts and on *pro per* litigants. The study was so well-received that the state of California adopted Doherty’s research design when it decided to conduct additional studies of similar self-help agencies around the state. Also with Doherty’s expertise, ERG is participating in a study of state campaign disclosure laws and practices that is funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. Since the project’s inception in 2002, twenty-three states have

improved their disclosure, and many of them have credited the project’s work for moving them in that direction.

One of the most traditional interdisciplinary studies, the study of Philosophy and Law, has long been a priority for UCLA School of Law. With seven faculty members who have advanced degrees in both philosophy and law, our scholars are applying philosophical approaches to substantive legal areas. As Professor Stephen Munzer explains, “It is important to have training in both philosophy and law. This creates an ideal marriage in our interdisciplinary work, allowing us to think on both sides of any issue. It is not enough to be centrally a lawyer who does some philosophy, or to be mainly a philosopher who knows something about the law. What’s ideal is to be able to think through issues both as a philosopher would and as a good lawyer would.” By attracting and retaining some of the best minds in law and philosophy, UCLA School of Law is generating scholarship on issues that are affecting today’s world. The faculty has recently published on cutting edge topics such as intellectual property in biotechnology, and the theoretic implications of the protection of freedom of speech.

By emphasizing an interdisciplinary approach, and not restricting the study of any topic, UCLA School of Law has generated a world-class faculty that demands innovative thought. As Michael J. Connell Professor of Law Rick Abel, one of the pioneers of the law and society movement, explains, “We continue to attract extraordinarily good faculty because we are so strong in interdisciplinary studies. We are looking for unconventional scholarship. That’s what we expect.”

Pedagogy Pushes the Boundaries

However, scholarship is not the only area where UCLA School of Law emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach. Teaching courses that combine disciplines provides students with new, more complex ways to view the world. For example, Professor Abel teaches a seminar on law and social change in which students select a problem such as the Santa Monica living wage ordinance, or an eighty-foot high mountain of concrete dumped by a corporation in a socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhood. This progressive approach gives students a realistic opportunity to incorporate political science, psychology, and sociology into their study of the law.

UCLA is also taking its interdisciplinary approach and applying it to emerging fields of study, in order to ensure that students are receiving an education that is not only well-rounded, but also relevant in today's world. For example, Critical Race Studies is profoundly interdisciplinary, engaging with history, literature, the social sciences, and economics. These interdisciplinary insights have produced highly influential work such as Professor Jerry Kang's "Cyber-race" (*Harvard Law Review*) which considers the nexus of race, communications, and the Internet. Other examples include Professor Devon Carbado's "The Law and Economics of Critical Race Theory" (with Mitu Gulati in the *Yale Law Review*) and Professor Laura Gómez' groundbreaking empirical studies of race and criminal law in the American Southwest. As Professor Gómez states, "While many law schools purport to value interdisciplinary work, not many actually understand and nurture it. The CRS concentration has been an important part of making this commitment real, benefiting both faculty and students inside and outside the concentration."

Reaching Beyond Our Walls

In order to offer the best education to students, UCLA School of Law also strives to incorporate faculty from departments across the campus, as well as outside lecturers into its curriculum and events. For example, the law school's course on child abuse and neglect consists of lectures by members of the faculties of Education, Law, Medicine, Nursing, Psychology, Public Health, and Social Welfare, and may also include representatives from various governmental agencies including the Department of Children and Family Services. Courses that take advantage of campus-wide expertise and national specialists, truly give UCLA School of Law students comprehensive instruction that enables them to understand issues from multiple perspectives.

Further strengthening the law school's ability to take advantage of the full scope of UCLA's offerings, the law school offers seven joint degree programs in the areas of Afro-American studies, American Indian Studies, Management, Public Health, Public Policy, Social Welfare, and Urban Planning. These pro-

"We continue to attract extraordinarily good faculty because we are so strong in interdisciplinary studies. We are looking for unconventional scholarship. That's what we expect."

Another rapidly developing field, Native American Law is becoming increasingly important as tribes exercise their right to sovereignty and challenge the supremacy of western law, creating new opportunities for young lawyers. As Professor Carole Goldberg explains, "There is an enhanced demand by private firms, tribes, and government agencies—both state and federal—to hire well-trained individuals who are well-informed about the histories, contemporary issues, and challenges of tribes." Meeting this demand necessitates an interdisciplinary approach, and UCLA recently established the Native Nations Law and Policy Center, which reaches out to other fields such as sociology, anthropology, and history in order to bring insights to bear on Indian Law and generate new approaches to the field. Similarly, students can earn a joint degree in Law and American Indian Studies "to broaden the Native law instruction that students receive to encompass tribal cultures, languages, histories, politics, and social structures," continues Goldberg.

grams can be individually tailored by the student to incorporate the most relevant classes from both departments, giving UCLA students the opportunity to really focus their learning in preparation for outstanding careers.

Each year UCLA School of Law hosts a broad spectrum of symposia on issues such as Environmental Law, International Law, and Entertainment Law. All of these incorporate experts from a host of fields, bringing the latest in critical thought on the most pertinent topics affecting the world of law. The 2004 Evan Frankel Environmental Symposium dealt with the topic, "Shaping Environmental Policy: Science in Context" and brought together leading minds in science, law, and public policy to provide cohesive thought on issues facing environmentalists today. The annual Entertainment Law Symposium, which unites business leaders from an array of industries, including the Internet, television, movies, video games, and law, gives faculty, students, alumni, and interested attendees the latest information on topics affecting the entertainment industry.