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UB Law Forum

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## FACULTY

# Introducing Stephanie Phillips

“**T**his is the single law school in the entire country that most attracts me, and it’s an incredible stroke of luck that I’ve ended up here.”

So says Professor Stephanie L. Phillips, who joined the UB Law School faculty in spring 1989. Indeed, her return to UB is something of a homecoming; she grew up in Buffalo, still has family here, and earned her bachelor of science degree in business administration at UB in 1978.

Since receiving the J.D. from Harvard Law School in 1981, Phillips has packed a lot of practical legal experience into her career. “I think it’s desirable to have experience as a practicing lawyer before you begin to teach,” she says. “I see myself as somebody who knows how things work in the world.”

After a year’s term as an instructor at the University of Miami (Fla.) School of Law, Phillips spent a year as a law clerk in the Office of Staff Attorneys at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, in San Francisco, Calif. In that position, she wrote bench memoranda, analyzed cases for judges and did other research and analysis work.

“It’s an experience I would highly recommend to law students,” Phillips says of the clerkship. “It sharpens your writing skills. You learn how an appellate court works — and also how a judge’s mind works.”

From there, Phillips moved across the country to Miami, becoming a litigator for the firm now known as Stearns, Weaver, Miller, Weissler, Alhadeff & Sitterson, P.A. She spent

nearly five years there, but, she says with a laugh, “now it seems like two lifetimes ago.” South Florida is a burgeoning center for the brokering of certain commodities, such as gold and silver, and the firm’s client list included International Precious Metals Corp. Phillips says she also spent months on a “monster” reinsurance case. But it was while she was representing the well-known financier and developer, Victor Posner, that Phillips developed expertise in litigating securities issues — an expertise she shares at UB Law School in teaching a course on Securities Regulation. Her other substantive course is Conflict of Laws.

In joining the UB Law faculty, Phillips also found the opportunity to write and teach in the area of religion and the law, long a personal interest. Her seminar “The Problem of Government-Sponsored Religion” addresses some of the same issues on which she’s preparing a major article: to wit, can a political and social system that confines its approach to the secular really be effective in creating and promoting a concept of the public good?

Also, she asks: What’s the relationship between the Constitution’s mandate of church-state separation and the idea that people’s spiritual health and development is essential for the political and social systems to function well?

Phillips is writing on securities regulation issues as well. A forthcoming article will examine the limitations, from a social policy point of view, of the Efficient Capital Market Hypothesis. “With the way the economic world is today, the competition from Japan and

the European Economic Community, we need a collective reconceptualization about how the allocation of capital in this country should work,” she says.

Phillips served as coordinator for the “Workshop on Critical Race Theory,” a conference of law professors from throughout the nation who are writing on issues of race and the law. They gathered at UB Law School in June.

She confesses her admiration that UB Law School accommodates both extensive legal theory and nuts-and-bolts practical teaching. “The clinical programs here are very good,” she says. “The people who are heading up the clinical programs have an extraordinary amount of experience in the real world, and the students really learn how to do things.

“And I like the students here. There are many things about this law school that make it feel like a community.”

Phillips sees a public-spirited attitude reflected in the tenor of the UB Law School experience. Though relatively few graduates are entering the “narrowly defined” public interest specialties, such as becoming legal aid attorneys, Phillips argues that the spirit remains with all of UB Law’s alumni.

“My guess is that grads are affected by the philosophy they’re learning here,” she says, “irrespective of the work situation they find themselves in. They may not be in a traditional “public interest” job, but a lot of them are working very much in the public interest.” ■