Head of the Class: Jeffrey Malkan Directs Research and Writing Program

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Faculty

HEAD of the CLASS

Jeffrey Malkan directs Research and Writing Program
JEFFREY MALKAN has joined UB Law School's Research and Writing Program as its director. He will also teach in the program, a core feature of the school's acclaimed New Curriculum.

Malkan comes to UB Law after a series of legal teaching positions at Stanford University (where he also earned the JSM degree, the equivalent of a master of laws), the University of Georgia, Illinois Institute of Technology and St. John's University in Queens. His law degree is from the City University of New York. He also spent time in private practice on Long Island, doing commercial litigation and land-use cases such as zoning and environmental law. His undergraduate work was at Columbia, and he also holds a Ph.D. in English from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He was raised in Allentown, Pa.

"I have a lot of interdisciplinary interests, so this is really an excellent place for me," Malkan says in his office on the sixth floor of O'Brian Hall. "Many law schools are increasingly focused on basic doctrine. But I was always very interested in law and the relationship between law and literature. Both involve the interpretation of texts, and there are overlapping theories of interpretation between law and literature."

He recognizes, too, the critical role that Research and Writing, a two-semester course for first-year students, can play in a student's legal education. "This is the part of the curriculum where students can think about what they are doing in their other courses," he says. "They can get a jump start if they obtain good training in the first two semesters of law school. Law is a series of analytical and rhetorical moves, kind of like a chess game. I am interested in trying to convey that to students."

For the Research and Writing Program, Malkan has several goals:

- Add a sixth faculty member in the 2002-2003 academic year, to provide for smaller class sizes.
- Rethink the curriculum to present it in smaller pieces that teach students "how to think" and ensure that each student is up to speed before pressing on.
- Eventually, provide more writing experience to UB Law students by expanding the Research and Writing Program to second- and third-year students.

"One of the things about UB Law that we pride ourselves on is small class sizes. I would like to see that philosophy apply to first-year students," he says. In the academic year just passed, he said, Research and Writing classes averaged 25 students apiece.

"The nice part of what I do now," he says, "is that I have a chance to shape the curriculum. Right now it is product-based - the students study different types of documents. I would like to focus more on smaller pieces that teach them how to think. And I would like to slow down the first semester, to make sure they are getting it before we go on to the next step. Additionally, my hope is to expand the program to second-year and third-year students, to provide more writing experiences."

He also notes that "the support of the alumni is what is really making the program grow and making these improvements possible."