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'Tying it together' in the classroom

“I don't like to be the one always doing the talking.” **Matthew Dimick**, who joins the UB Law School faculty in September, says of his teaching style. “When I think of the professors I liked best in law school, they did several things. They asked people questions, but they also would, at the end of the class, spend time tying it all together. They usually brought in a little bit of theory that also did some of the work of putting things together.”

Dimick, a Cornell Law School graduate whose specialty is labor law, brings with him a doctoral degree in sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He says studying labor law from a comparative perspective – his dissertation looked at “union democracy” in the United States and Great Britain – is an effective way to understand the law in context. “Often you learn more about your own system of laws or rules when you study a different one,” he says. “It’s then that the questions come: ‘Why do we do it this way if they do it that way?’ I think a lot of good learning can come that way.”

He also is considering a problem-based teaching method in which the professor presents a fact scenario and the students, in effect, act as lawyers, working through the steps in handling a case and getting a grounding in the analysis, research and writing that attorneys do every day.

Dimick, who grew up in California’s Bay Area and then in Denver, was an English major at Brigham Young University. As a Mormon, he complet-



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*– Associate Professor
Matthew Dimick*

ed the traditional two years of missionary work (in Las Vegas) after his freshman year of college, then returned to complete his degree. “Both in high school and in my freshman year, I hadn’t really figured out how to work academically,” he says. “The mission is really what taught me how to work.”

He was already thinking of pursuing an academic career when he entered Cornell Law School, where – in a small-world coincidence – he was in-

spired to pursue labor law partly when he took a class in employment and labor law from UB Law Professor Dianne Avery, who was a visiting professor at Cornell at the time.

“Labor was an interest I had before law school,” he says. “My religious background has something to do with it. Many, if not all, religions have a concern about social and economic justice. I think the scriptures and lessons sank in at some point and manifested themselves as an interest in labor.”

When he visited UB Law, Dimick says, he was reminded of the school’s historical strength in labor law. Emeritus professor James Atleson’s *Values and Assumptions in American Labor Law* is a well-thumbed reference on his bookshelf, and he points to Professors Avery and Robert Steinfeld as others with whom he is looking forward to sharing ideas. “The Law School curriculum is so diverse that it’s often hard to find a real good critical mass of people in a field,” Dimick says. “But these colleagues, including people from the sociology department, bring different perspectives, different insights, and exposure to ideas and things that you would never have otherwise.”

Dimick and his wife, Alexandra, have a son, Liam, 7, and a daughter, Normandie, 3.