

# ST. THOMAS LAW NEWS

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## NAVIGATING FINAL EXAMS

By: John F. Hernandez, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs

As we are about to begin the final exam period, most students, and particularly those of you taking exams for the first time, feel some anxiety and concern about successfully navigating the process. Remember, your objective is to demonstrate your understanding of the material as it is tested by the professor. You should make sure you are fully aware of the testing methods that will be used by your professors and make sure you know the guidelines that will be applicable to the exam (e.g., how much time, whether it is open book or closed book, etc.). My office and the Law School Registrar's Office are charged with the responsibility of administering the examinations. With thousands of examinations to oversee, this can be a daunting task. Therefore, you have the responsibility to see to it that you know how the process works. Below are some guidelines you should keep in mind. If you have any question or need clarification, please contact me at [jhernandez@stu.edu](mailto:jhernandez@stu.edu).

1. Know when and where each of your examinations is scheduled. Do not rely on your memory or what may have been an earlier version of the exam schedule. **Check the most recent exam schedule.** Write out your schedule, and post it where you can see it. If you arrive late or miss an exam, you will not likely be able to take the exam and will get an F in the class.
2. Make yourself aware of what the professor is allowing you to use in the exam. If an exam is "closed book," you will not be able to use any kind of notes or have any books or materials with you. If the professor is allowing some kind of rule book or some limitation on the number of pages of an outline or notes, make sure you understand exactly what will be allowed. For example if the professor allows five pages of notes, does that mean five pages front and back or just five pages on the front? If a professor is allowing the use of a rule book, that may not necessarily mean you can use a photocopy of the rule book, and it may be limited to certain editions or other limitations. Make sure you know and understand. If a professor is allowing you the use of a calculator, you need to make sure you have one that complies with his or her rule.
3. If you are using ExamSoft, make sure you have registered and followed the download directions that were provided by the Registrar. The law school does not provide computers, so you have to supply your own computer. You always use ExamSoft at your own risk. Although it is a highly reliable, if you experience problems with ExamSoft, be prepared to switch to hand writing the exam.
4. Arrive early for your exams, and make sure you follow the directions of the proctors. Cell phones must be turned **off**. I suggest you leave your cell phone in your car. If your cell phone goes off during an exam, the proctor will take the phone and give it to me. Your phone may be retained until the termination of the exam period.

Avoid even the **appearance of impropriety** with regard to exam procedures. Any student caught engaging in any activity that presents the possibility of cheating will be referred to the Honor Council. Students determined to have engaged in any cheating-like behavior generally are expelled. Do not have notes, pieces of paper, or anything not allowed for use in the exam on your person or near you. Do not throw away outlines in the restroom garbage cans or leave notes or outlines in the restroom. Do not talk to anyone if you leave an exam to use the restroom.

Avoid frequent or prolonged restroom breaks. Proctors and the administration will be policing such behavior. If you have a physical condition that may cause you to engage in what might otherwise be suspicious activity, please inform me.

6. If you wish to use some kind of noise deadening device other than foam ear plugs, then you must have the device preapproved by me. Bring the device to me at your earliest convenience.

7. The proctors are there to make sure all students take the examinations in a controlled environment. Proctors will be walking around the rooms and looking at you while you take the examinations. That is their job. You should get used to this kind of observation during exam taking. It is employed on the Bar exam as well. Follow the directions of the proctors. Avoid creating situations that lend themselves to confusion or misunderstandings. Do not talk to each other or engage in any kind of interaction with other students while the proctors are gathering the examinations at the end of the examination. If you encounter what you think is inappropriate behavior on the part of the proctors (e.g., proctors talking on their phones during one of your exams), please report that to me.

8. The class professor, Associate Dean Dykas, Assistant Dean Kelly, the Registrar or Assistant Registrar, and I may walk in and out of the examinations to make sure there are no problems or concerns. The class professor cannot answer individual questions. If you have a question, ask the proctor for clarification.

9. Never walk out of an examination with the examination question(s), scantron answer sheets, or bluebooks. Do not rush to get out of the examinations. It is important you organize your materials and take a few minutes to make sure you have turned in everything you are required to turn in. This is especially true if it is an open book exam. Do not mix the examination materials with the materials you brought into the room. If you exit the examination with examination materials, you will be referred to the Honor Council.

Prior to going into an exam, take a few moments and make sure you have what you need and nothing more. Prior to exiting an exam, take a few moments and make sure you have followed all directions and turned in all materials.

If we work together, the exam process is less stressful for all concerned and proceeds with few problems. If you see or find out about anything that is troublesome to you, bring it to my attention as soon as possible.

## **LAW SCHOOL GRADUATION**

The Law School Graduation/Hooding Ceremony will be held, Saturday, December 17, 2011, beginning promptly at 10:00 a.m. (Graduates are required to line up at 9:15 a.m.) The ceremony will take place in the Fernandez Family Center for Leadership and Wellness. All attendees must have a ticket (provided by a graduate). The Law School speaker at the graduation will be Ari Neimand, the law school December Valedictorian. Following the ceremony, Dean Ray will host a reception at the Law School for the December 2011 graduates, their families, and guests.

The Baccalaureate Mass for the December 2011 graduates will be held Friday evening beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Chapel of Saint Anthony.

## **FLORIDA BAR APPLICATION DEADLINES**

The date for you to file your Florida Bar application is January 17, 2012. We encourage all first year students to complete the application process over the winter break. This will begin your bar admission process and pursue clearance to participate in the Certified Legal Internship program. First year student applicants will pay the \$75 student registrant fee. In your third year of law school, you will pay the converter fee, which is currently \$375, to convert your student registration. The Registrant Bar Application is available online at [www.floridabarexam.org](http://www.floridabarexam.org).

We strongly encourage all 1L students to complete the application process over the winter break if you think you ultimately may sit for the Florida Bar.