Changes to the 1L Curriculum (2020-21)

Associate Deans decide to make the small groups one semester for the 2020-2021 academic year

ANNECY PANG (2L)

Students entering 1L in Fall 2020 will have their small group class in fall semester only, rather than the full-year format offered in the past. Legal Process has also been moved from the Winter term to the Fall term. First-year students now have Legal Process, small group, Legal Research and Writing (LRW), and one substantive law course in the fall, with the three remaining large-group substantive law classes in the winter. According to a statement by Associate Dean Essert, the changes were due to constraints imposed by COVID-19.

“The changes are not meant to reflect any faculty’s decision may have been required to proceed through the Faculty Council.” How- ever, the SLS maintained their commitment to engaging with the Faculty in a productive dialogue to ensure the best possible student experiences for the 1L class.

The changes came after the Curriculum Committee submitted a proposal in March 2020 to alter the 1L curriculum to shorten the year-long small group to first semester, extend LRW into the second semester, and add a 1L moot. The proposal elicited a negative response amongst both students and faculty, with students launching a petition that called for Faculty Council to reject any changes until more detail and greater consultation could be provided. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, Faculty Council was suspended for the 2019-2020 academic year. It remains to be seen whether it will be addressed at the first meeting this year on October 7.

IVY XU (1L)

The month of September has been characterized by many things: masks, Zoom, and park hangouts, but perhaps most significantly by the school being embroiled in controversy over the alleged offer extended to Valentina Azarova.

Calls for independent investigation and widespread criticism

The U of T Law student body has largely been disappointed and frustrated by these allegations with many, particularly those involved with the IHRP, concerned about its fate. “The IHRP offers extremely high quality legal services that serve society’s most vulnerable people. Not only is it a fantastic program for students to learn and practice international law, but it is a beacon of U of T Law’s commitment to justice,” Jean-Pierre D’Angelo (2L) says, an IHRP 2020 Summer Fellow and a current executive of the IHRP’s Venezuela Accountability Project. “The alleged interference by the administration on Ms. Azarova’s candidacy not only undermines the IHRP’s ability to serve its clients, but undermines U of T Law’s reputation as a defender of procedural fairness, justice, and academic freedoms. I hope that this matter is investigated and resolved expeditiously so that our community and the legal profession as a whole can continue to hold us in high regard.”

An open letter from IHRP students and alumni “demand a clear, actionable plan for rehabilitating the IHRP’s and the Faculty’s reputation and for ensuring the IHRP’s success and integrity for future generations of law students.” The Students’
Welcome, and welcome back to U of T Law!

It’s undoubtedly a strange year, but shaping up to be an eventful one.

In this issue, you’ll find statistics from the 2020 Toronto 1L Recruit, exit interviews with former staff members, musings from frustrated students over course selection, and a story about the IHRP Director hiring controversy.

We’re so excited to be your editors-in-chief for Volume 22 of Ultra Vires. We believe that now, more than ever, the student community needs to stay connected and we hope to be one source of that. Although providing food at pitch meetings is out of the question, we will endeavour to provide the tea.

Every month, you can look forward to a dose of news, opinions, and sarcasm. We’re always on the lookout for talented editors and writers to make the paper happen. If you have comments or stories to pitch, you can always get in touch at editor@ultravires.ca.

Wishing you the best for the beginning of another school year, and thanks for reading,

— Vivian Cheng & Angela Gu
Co-Editors-in-Chief, Ultra Vires
Five Equity-Facing Groups Pen Open Letter to the Deans’ Office to Address Equity Issues at the Faculty

Students call for the Faculty to improve equity training, hire more racialized faculty, and modify curriculum to recognize legacy of colonialism

ANNECY PANG (2L)*

On August 10, five equity groups at the law school — Asia Law Society (ALS), Black Law Students Association (BLSA), Indigenous Law Students Association (ILSA), Out in Law (OIL), and South Asian Law Students Association (SALSA) — sent an open letter to the Deans’ Office to address gaps in the school’s current approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The letter centers on the Faculty’s position of power as one of Canada’s pre-eminent legal institutions and its obligation to “ensure students are well-equipped to recognize and dismantle systemic racism within the legal sphere.” The letter emphasizes how systemic racism manifests, including the pervasiveness of colonial theory in the curriculum, the interconnectedness of “firm fit” with white supremacy, patriarchy, and classism, and the historic underrepresentation of marginalized communities within the student body, faculty, and staff of the law school.

The letter concludes with detailed calls to action separated into short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations. Highlights of the calls to action include improved student equity training to better recognize the lived experiences of students from traditionally unrecognized backgrounds, increased hiring of racialized faculty members, and a modified curriculum that reflects the legacy of colonialism in the law.

“The idea of a letter arose after a conversation between equity-facing groups and marginalized students in the Faculty and responds to the renewed attention to racism across Canada,” says Asha Gordon (2L), Co-President of BLSA. “We looked at the different initiatives that equity-facing groups are working on and how we could use our positionality as law students and as future lawyers to create change.”

The groups chose the format of an open letter to emphasize everybody at the Faculty’s collective responsibility to address systemic racism. “It was a good choice because it captures that it is an ongoing conversation with everyone and that it is everybody’s job to put in the work,” says Katie Nordstrom (2L), Co-President of ILSA.

The letter went through multiple iterations and drafts on a shared Google Doc. “Working together with the other equity-facing groups really emphasized allyship,” says Dhiitj Ghakravarty (2L), Co-President of SALSA. “I feel like the groups will be working together a lot more and I am really excited to see that.”

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As of the date of publication, the letter has 156 signatures from various student organizations, including Ultra Vires, current students, and alumni of the Faculty. “The engagement has been a great starting point and I hope it remains consistent because racism and its effects on marginalized communities is an ongoing issue,” says Gordon.

*Editor’s Note: Annecy Pang is Co-President of the Asia Law Society. Ultra Vires, as well as members of its editorial board, is a signatory to the open letter.

Students’ Law Society Election

Results Are In

Students’ Law Society elects 11 new representatives for 2020-21 school year

GRAHAM ROTENBERG (2L)

The Students’ Law Society (SLS) added 11 new representatives to its ranks following the election period that ended Friday, September 25. The election results were released by email on Saturday, September 26, after some technical issues postponed the election. The election is conventionally held at the beginning of the academic year to allow new students to join the law school, and joined the StAG committee. Koilpillai. (3L) ran uncontested and won re-election to the StAG committee. Koilpillai has held a StAG position for the past two years.

Three other 1Ls joined SLS in an uncontested election for Social Affairs committee positions: Apollonia Mastrogiacono, Saskia De Vries, and Alexander Day. In the contested 2L election for a single seat on the committee, Thryn Irwin was elected.

Remuska Koilpillai (3L) ran uncontested and joined the StAG committee. Koilpillai has held a StAG position for the past two years.

Two 3Ls — Rachael Girolametto-Prosen and Emma Brown — ran uncontested and were elected to the Social Affairs committee. Brown was last year’s Social Affairs Communications Director and Girolametto-Prosen was a StAG representative for the past two years. In addition to their experiences working with the law school administration, these candidates highlighted finding new ways outside of Call to the Bar to engage with peers socially such as picnics, trivia, and movie nights.

Graham Rotenberg (2L)
Congratulations to everyone for making it through the first month of this strange new world! Law school is challenging in the best of circumstances, but these three students rose to the occasion this year to help guide us through it.

The SLS is the student government representing all J.D. and joint program students at the Faculty of Law. The SLS has two branches: Student Affairs and Governance (StAG) and Social Affairs, composed of elected representatives from each year of study. The SLS Executive also appoints upper-year Officers: Equity Officers, Treasurers, Communications Directors, Administrative Director, Secretary, and Chief Returning Officer (CRO).

Welcome to the 1Ls

We are so excited to have you join the Faculty of Law this year! This might not be the law school experience that you expected, but I am confident that you will all grow stronger through it.

A special shoutout on behalf of the SLS and the 1L class to the students who organized Orientation Week: Branden Cave, Thryn Irwin, and Meruba Sivaselvachandran. Orientation is difficult enough in person, and this year it was brought to the Law Society of Ontario (LSO) via Zoom. The SLS and 2L students have worked hard to organize a synchronous clubs fair to address these topics. We are glad to see that most course selection issues have been resolved, but we continue to monitor the various facets of course accessibility (i.e., lecture recording and the online vs in-person experience).

Additionally, we have been working with the Law Students’ Society of Ontario (LSSO), which represents all law students across Ontario. Our work with the LSSO has involved supporting a motion brought to the Law Society of Ontario (LSO) requesting that (1) law students be represented at the LSO and (2) articling students be voting members of the LSO.

We have also compiled three SLS Guides for the general law school, 1Ls, and transfer students. Additionally, we organized a synchronous clubs fair to accommodate the Faculty’s synchronous one, instituted a mostly centralized club sign-up form, and successfully pushed for the consolidation of the public interest programs’ joint volunteer recruitment process.

In addition to some governance updates, you will also note that the SLS has a brand-new look! Students this summer came together to provide input on our new logo. We have updated our website accordingly. As always, it is full of useful information about the SLS members, elections, and the e-obsitical study materials.

SLS Priorities

As we move forward past elections with a full slate of SLS Representatives and Officers, we have two main goals in mind this year:

1. Equity and Accessibility

We have seen a dearth of responses from students for accessibility at the Faculty of Law; however, lecture recordings are one facet of the work that we will be doing. We also intend to revisit the accommodations process for improved clarity on how students can navigate this space for one-off requests and longer-term needs. Additionally, we will continue our work on tuition, being mindful of the financial impacts of COVID-19, the Ford government’s tuition haircut, and Dean Iacobucci’s term ending on December 31, 2020.

In light of reduced social opportunities, we have reduced our Fall term fee and will re-evaluate our Winter term fee. As well, we are considering the implications of funding and equity-based considerations.

2. Community building

The Social Affairs Committee is dedicated to finding meaningful ways of creating community within the law school. Things will not look the same as in the past (pore one out for Call to the Bar) but we are striving to provide the best experience possible.

However, community-building does not fail entirely on the SLS. This summer, students and alumni wrote letters and built groups about implementing a mandatory course on Indigenous peoples and Aboriginal law (as requested by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action #28), the LSO and #Blackouttuesday, the Faculty’s obligations to the Basket of Truth and Black Racism, and the Faculty, recording lectures, supporting Black Canadians, and more. I cannot anticipate what this year will look like, but I am sure that it will be one already. We continue along this path, I have high hopes for this year. I look forward to working with the newly filled SLS — and with all of you — to make this a year to remember for all the right reasons.

FEATURES

IHPR Director Hiring

Law Society has penned a letter calling for greater accountability of the administration.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) announced on September 21 that it is investigating the allegations of external interference, which if true, would “constitute a serious breach of principles of academic freedom.”

This controversy has prompted Leslie Green and Craig Scott, law professors at Queen’s University and Osgoode Hall Law School, respectively, to both write letters to the Canadian Judicial Council urging for an investigation into the judge for inappropriate political discussions. At this time, the Judicial Council has not announced the commencement of an investigation.

Concern has also been voiced by Amnest International Canada, which offers IHPR students volunteering opportunities through the Digital Verification Corps. In a letter to Dean Iacobucci on September 21, the organization stressed fear “that any appearance of impropriety could harm the future of Amnesty’s partnership with the IHPR.”

Other critics include the CAUT, previous and current members of the IHPR, many members of the student body, and legal professionals, activists and academics in the broader community.

So what happens now? The fate of the IHPR

Dean Iacobucci announced that the search for an IHPR Director was cancelled in the interim. But, he promised to “take advantage of this pause to make the International Criminal Rights Program even more successful than it has been in the past.”

However, the IHPR has been without a director for over a year. The Director hiring controversy has rekindled discussions about the school’s commitment to the IHPR. Members of the IHPR Alumni Network Steering Committee in a letter to the Dean’s Office on September 23 called the controversy “symptomatic of a longer-term failure by the Faculty of Law administration to adequately recognize and support the Program.”

The IHPR’s operating budget was already expected to suffer a 36% cut in the 2020-2021 academic year as part of the school’s austerity measures announced in 2019. Based on the calculations of the Alumni Network Steering Committee, this amounted to a 51% budget cut in real terms compared to 15 years ago, in stark contrast to a 130% tuition increase in the same period.

IHPR students and alumni emphasized the IHPR’s importance for educating and developing students in their open letter.

Tension arising from accusations about Palestinian oppression and Anti-Semitic stereotypes

Some legal professionals, activists, and academics stressed the importance of upholding academic freedom, especially in the context of contentious debates about Palestinian oppression and dispossession. Various professors interviewed by the Toronto Star believe that Azarova’s views on Israel’s occupation are mainstream. An Al Jazeera article called the alleged recursion of Azarova’s offer for her scholarship “anti-Palestinian racism.”

Additionally, Over 1,200 scholars and lawyers also signed a statement denouncing “Palestinian speech suppression.”

Given the discourse surrounding this developing news story, U of T Law’s Jewish Law Students Association (JLSA) cautioned the law school community in an open letter against perpetuating anti-Semitic stereotypes. The letter explained, “perhaps one of the most insidious of such stereotypes is the long-held belief that Jews act as ‘puppet masters,’ controlling and exerting influence behind the scenes while never the focus of attention.” The JLSA expressed its disappointment that an inference of the judge being Jewish was made so quickly despite no mention of the judge being Jewish in the initial Globe and Mail article.

While the events surrounding this story are painful and students and the broader community may not know what truly happened, one thing’s for sure: the administration must commit to fair and transparent procedures free from external influence.

A comprehensive resource page regarding this developing story can be found on ultravires.ca.

Members of the UltraVires.ca editorial board have been and continue to be involved with the IHPR, and are signatories to the IHPR Students and Alumni Open Letter.
An Exit Interview with Petra Molnar, Former Acting Director of the IHRP

Molnar reflects on her time at the IHRP, discussing the challenges of COVID-19 and the pleasure of working with students

ANNECY PANG (2L)

In August, Petra Molnar left the role of Acting Director of the International Human Rights Program (IHRP) to help start the Refugee Law Lab at the Centre for Refugee Studies and Os- goode Hall Law School. Petra graciously sat down with Ultra Vires to talk about her time at the IHRP and her upcoming research.

Addition as of September 29: Petra would like to express her disappointment in the recent decisions surrounding the hiring of a permanent Director for the IHRP. She calls on the administration to prioritize the student experience in international human rights at the law school.

Ultra Vires (UV): How did you become interested in international human rights law?

Petra Molnar (PM): My interest stems from my work in refugee and migration issues. Before I went to law school, I was a refugee settlement worker, assisting people with a variety of issues when they arrived in Canada. As a newcomer myself, I felt an affinity to a lot of those issues. Throughout law school, I stayed focused on refugee and migration issues. I later articled at the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, which does both immigration and refugee law. But I wanted to broaden my work more towards international law and international human rights law as well. The Research Associate position came up at the IHRP and that’s how this adventure started.

UV: What does a day in the life of a director look like?

PM: When you’re a director, the majority of your time is spent on the sexy, substantive work, but on the administrative tasks that keep a clinic running. The nice thing about the job is that there is a lot of variety — every day is different. Before COVID-19, my days would be filled with meetings, emails, calls, and just trying to get a handle on all the different projects. Another huge part of the role is support: supporting our students and staff to make sure that they can do the best work that they can and are able to. The role is a great way to work closely with people and to build bridges between different communities, within the faculty and also beyond. So that’s been really rewarding.

UV: Are there any aspects of the role that you found unexpected, especially given the pandemic?

PM: The pandemic definitely created an interesting set of considerations for us because the IHRP runs a Summer Fellowship program. The majority of fellows were adversely impacted because they were not able to go to their international placements. It felt like our entire fellowship program just collapsed overnight. It required a lot of creative thinking to figure out how to find jobs for all of these fellows. About a third of our original placements were viable, there was some creative restructuring for some, and then the IHRP ended up absorbing six fellows. Normally we take one. So, we definitely had a very full house this summer, but it was a really awesome group of people to work with.

UV: What was your favourite part of the role?

PM: Working with people and the students in particular. I’ve learned so much from the students and every interaction was a blessing. It was a great way to meet passionate people who really want to make a difference, who think critically about their role in the law, and how to lawyer differently. That’s one of the things I will miss the most about this role: the daily engagement with students, because you folks definitely give me optimism that I think a lot of us in this field need.

UV: In addition to the Acting Director role, you are also a Mozilla Fellow with European Digital Rights; could you tell me more about your work there?

PM: This is actually one of the projects that I’ll be working on now after my time at the IHRP is over. After the Bots at the Gate report that we did with Citizen Lab, I started looking at migration and technology issues from a more international perspective. I ended up landing a fellowship to look at the ways technology is used in and around the border, and the human rights impacts it has, with the idea of grounding the lived experiences of people who are actually interacting and experiencing this technology. We’re actually working on a documentary alongside this, which is a brand new venture for me. We want to bring individual stories to the forefront and want the public to start thinking about some of these issues. With COVID-19, our plans were delayed but we’re going to try and do some interviewing in the Mediterranean and put out a report this fall that will coincide with the report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Discrimination.

UV: How did you come upon the role of Associate Director of the Refugee Law Lab and what do you envision for the new lab?

PM: I was contacted by Sean Rehaag with this opportunity. I decided to take it because it really aligns with my work on migration. It’s a baby lab, just starting off. We’re keeping it open and flexible in terms of what it will look like, but it will sit at the intersection of migration, technology, and human rights.

UV: That sounds really exciting! Do you have any parting words of advice for law students hoping to work in international human rights?

PM: I think for me, one of the most important pieces of advice I got was to trust your gut. When you’re a law student, you get pulled in so many different directions. There are so many competing voices and many of them are from within yourself as well. But I think a lot of people know themselves more than they realize, and it’s important to truly ask yourself what it is you want to do, both as a lawyer and as a person. What kind of person do you want to be and is there a way to incorporate kindness into your practice? Is there a way to incorporate radical social change into it? I think these are the types of questions that will guide you towards the opportunities that make sense. And I don’t mean to negate some of the structural questions that we all have to ask ourselves; the debt load these days is huge. But at the end of the day, you have to do what feels right for you and for your broader life project.

UV: Is there anything that we’ve forgotten or that you would like to add?

PM: I will really miss everybody and I can’t wait to stay in touch. I was going to say my door is always open, but I don’t have a door right now so feel free to reach out at pmolnar@yorku.ca.

This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

MOLNAR RECENTLY TRAVELLED TO LESBOS, GREECE, FOR A LONG-TERM PROJECT INVESTIGATING TECHNOLOGY AND MIGRATION. PHOTO COURTESY OF KENYA-JADE PINTO.
Commemorating a US Supreme Court Legend

Students and faculty reflect on Justice Ginsburg’s passing

GRAHAM ROTENBERG (2L)

From September 23 to 25, masked mourners filled the streets of Washington D.C. to remember the death of an icon, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the US Supreme Court’s legendary liberal lioness, passed away at age 87 on September 18. The COVID-19 pandemic could not prevent a global outpouring of love and respect for the late jurist.

Across the borders in Canada and at U of T Law, these sentiments were not lost. Individuals across the political and professional spectrum added to the chorus of praise and appreciation for what the future of the Supreme Court would look like without the “Notorious RBG.” Some commentators lauded Ginsburg’s message of mass mobilization for noble causes, while others dissected how her death could impact the contentious election year political environment, reaching varied conclusions.

Although the legal community was less (physically) rambunctious, students and professors still found space to reflect on Justice Ginsburg’s passing. The Faculty of Law tweeted and then reweeted about her death, and over 100 students reacted to a post about Ginsburg’s death in the U of T Law Virtual Community Facebook group.

The Women & the Law Society said Ginsburg was a “warrior of justice, and her words have abetted, and will always continue to articulate beyond the borders of jurisprudence and time.”

This begs a complex question: what made Justice Ginsburg an icon? Why was she the source of memes, movies, and even books about her workout routine? Looking back on Justice Ginsburg’s legacy, there is not one reason but several for her favor. Her tenacity, brilliant strategic mind, and novel way of re-framing legal problems provide some, but not all, possible answers.

The Jewish Law Student Association (JLSA) highlights Justice Ginsburg’s tenacity, emphasizing how she “overcame continuous hurdles of discrimination not only as a woman, but as a Jewish woman.” Espe- cially as a law student, her persistence feels superheroic. For instance, she persevered in the face of personal tragedy at Harvard Law School, where she was one of only nine women in her class. When Martin, her husband and a fellow law student, was diagnosed with testicular cancer, Ginsburg did not allow them to stop pursuing their legal education. In addition to caring for her young daughter, she attended classes for two, doubled her course load and effectively teaching Martin his third-year class material while completing classes herself. She graduated. She edited the Harvard Law Review and finished near the top of her class.

Ginsburg’s excellence, and late-in-life elevation to icon, was a product of her deliberative process, according to Professor Emerita and Director of the International Reproductive and Sexual Health Program, Rebecca Cook. Professor Cook suggests that it perhaps lies in her judicial decisions, she was a “very thorough and deliberative writer who brought issues alive with her writing.”

Justice Ginsburg’s approach to litigation was also impressive. Professor Cook highlights Ginsburg’s great skill of how to “reach people where they are.” Professor Cook and the Women & the Law Group point to Ginsburg’s shifting of the focus of discrimination to focus on a topic all-male juries understood: men. Ginsburg brought male litigants, rather than female litigants, in front of all-male, all-white courts. According to Professor Cook, this strategy was a mechanism for Ginsburg to win people over on their terms so “she could bring the court around.”

And come around they did. Ginsburg won five cases out of six in the Supreme Court. Front v. Richardson and Roe v. Wade are part of the canon of sex-based discrimination cases that is mandatory reading for 1Ls at American law schools. There was a common thread in Ginsburg cases: laws that discriminated on the basis of sex ought to be unconstitutional. Now they are. Many laws are no longer on the books because of Justice Ginsburg, the American Civil Liberties Union, and countless others’ efforts to rid laws of sex-based discrimination.

The Women & the Law Society also cite Himes v.6/12/19 as an area of Ginsburg inspiration. In that case, famously included in the movie “On the Basis of Sex,” Justice Ginsburg represented a widower who was denied survivor benefits under Social Security which permitted widows, but denied widowers, the ability to collect benefits. She won. Women & the Law says that by “winning in part, legal victories for men, Ginsburg paved the pathway for women’s rights as well.”

On the bench, Professor Cook notes that Ginsburg’s seminal decision in United States v. Virginia illustrates her approach to the law at its best. Professor Cook argues that the case — which successfully ended Virginia Military Institute’s male-only admissions policy because it unconstitutionally excluded women and re-affirmed a heightened level of judicial scrutiny for sex-based discrimination — represents Justice Ginsburg’s successful efforts to elevate “understanding gender discrimination through stereotypes of women.” In that decision, Professor Cook highlights how she pushed back against stereotypical notions that women were “incapable of bearing military leadership because they lacked the physical strength required of the military” by challenging an evidentiary record bare of any facts to support that proposition. This decision’s impact was “horizontal,” reverberating in Canada, Europe, and legal scholarship according to Professor Cook.

Justice Ginsburg passed away on the eve of the commencement of the Jewish high holidays. According to JESA, “traditional Jewish belief tells us that those who pass away on Rosh Hashanah are ‘tzaddikim,’ or ‘righteous ones.’ They said ‘never before has a movement risen to true.’” The Women & the Law Society also highlighted Justice Ginsburg’s righteous legacy by saying “she never sought approval nor fame. Ruth Bader Ginsburg was simply herself. She was intelligent, resilient, fiery, and idealistic and those qualities are really what made her [...]. Notur- ious.” That legacy will never be forgotten, and her glass-shattering status will follow her in death, as much as it did in life, for she was the first woman and Jewish person — to lie in state. May she always be remembered.
Toronto Summer 2020 1L Recruitment Results

Fifty first-years obtained employment through the 1L Recruit, down 24 percent from last year

ALISHA LI (2L)

This year’s official Toronto 1L Recruit provided summer jobs for 30 1L students, down 24 percent from the 66 hires in 2019. Of the 30 total positions, 21 went to students from the University of Toronto Faculty of Law (a whopping 24 percent, up from 35 percent in 2019 and 40 percent in 2018). Of those 21 successful U of T contenders, 17 were from the JD program and the remaining four were from the dual JD/MBA program.

Twelve employers participated in the 1L Recruit this year, compared to 14 in 2019. Of those participating, most displayed a small (but noticeable) decline in job positions — Aird & Berlis LLP and Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP both hired one less student than in 2019. Dentons Canada LLP hired two less, while other firms that usually hire through the 1L Recruit, including Torys LLP and Zarek Taylor Grossman Hanrahan LLP, opted to not hire any 1Ls altogether.

Out of the 12 employers who participated in the 2020 Recruit, nine responded to our inquiries. With respect to the three firms that did not provide their statistics, Bereskin & Parr hired five students last year, while Ridout & Maybee LLP hired one. Smart & Biggar LLP did not participate in the 2019 Toronto 1L Recruit.

Faculty of Law Internal Recruit

The Career Development Office estimated that 31 1Ls obtained employment through the Law School Summer Employment Program (LSSEP). Students who secured jobs through the LSSEP spent their summers working in places such as Downtown Legal Services, the David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights, the Faculty of Law itself, Future of Law/Blue J Legal Fellowship, and the International Human Rights Program.

In response to the effects of COVID-19 on the job market, the Faculty announced in April 2020 the creation of an additional pool of positions for 3-week summer Research Assistantships. Of the 63 students who were placed in the Research Assistant program, 40 were 1Ls.
Pandemic Gym Options Near Campus

A guide to staying fit during the pandemic

GRiffin Murphy (1L)

These unprecedented times have given us a valid excuse for unprecedented levels of inactivity. However, as September marked the start of a new chapter for many students, so too has it pushed us to get back in shape. While health guidelines and provincial restrictions still pose challenges, here are some ways we can currently pump the iron around campus.

As of September 8, the Athletic Centre, Goldring Centre, Varsity Centre, and Back Campus have all re-opened for limited services. Entrances have been modified and hand sanitizer stations have been equipped in compliance with guidelines from the City of Toronto. Appointments to use workout facilities must be booked for these locations in advance.

Keep in mind that when making an appointment, you’re making it for a specific area of the gym: either a squat rack, free weights, machine circuit, or the cardio machines. Also note that a pre-visit screening form must be completed before accessing any facility. The campus mask policy is in effect when you are not exercising.

Furthermore, external rentals of space are not being accepted until October 12 or until further notice. Swimming lanes remain open for booking in compliance with city guidelines, and workout classes may still be booked and performed either online or in-person (you may have already seen some of these classes as you walk through Queen’s Park).

Intramurals are also back on, albeit in a limited capacity. Available sports include table tennis, dodgeball, spikeball, bocce ball, badminton, “washer toss,” and “Amazing Race.” There are also eports intramurals being offered on PS4 and Xbox for FIFA, NHL, and NBA.

Don’t forget to visit your local health centre for the COVID-19 vaccine. If you’re able and willing, please consider donating to one of the many local organizations who have been impacted by the lockdown.

Summer in a Bottle

In Vino Veritas

Amy Lin (2L)

We know, we know! It will already be fall by the time you read this issue of Ultra Vires but just because we are slowly walking into autumn does not mean you cannot pick up a bottle and join us in keeping summer around a little longer.

Whether it is shared over patio drinks on a warm sunny day or enjoyed alone while binge-watching Indian Matchmaking, here are our favorite summer wines this year. While Olivia and I spent the summer exploring what the Okanagan Valley had to offer, Angela shares a great Riesling recommendation that is bottled right here in Ontario. If you are feeling a bit more adventurous and are looking to experiment with a bold summer red, check out Kimia’s review at the end for some inspiration.

So, welcome back to another exciting year of wine reviews with In Vino Veritas and a very special welcome to the law school for those of you who may be coming across our column for the very first time.

Angela Gu

Tawse Limestone Ridge Riesling, 2017

This Riesling has remained my absolute favourite wine since I came across it a year ago. Even in my quest to drink more broadly, none have yet displaced Tawse’s Limestone Ridge. It is seriously crushable, very easy-drinking, wonderfully fruit-forward, and somehow manages to remain balanced with just enough acidity. It’s fruity on the nose, with scents of both tropical fruit and stone fruit (I detected pineapple and apricot). It is not deceptively, and it tastes just as good as it smells. Of Tawse’s Rieslings, this one has a lot more “oompf” compared to their Quarry Road Riesling of the same vintage; the Limestone Ridge is a velvety white wine with body. Although this wine is perfect on its own, I will note that it even works with the richness of duck confit. It’s a fun wine.

Amy Lin

Nk’Mip Cellars Rosé, 2019

This summer, with the tight restrictions on international travels, it seemed as if everyone was either visiting BC or knew of someone who was. I spent the entire summer in Vancouver and one of my favorite things about living on the West Coast was its wonderful wineries; with the Okanagan right around the corner, there was always something new to discover. While I had heard of the Nk’Mip Cellars before (they were the first Indigenous-owned winery in North America and have won many honors, including being named Canadian Winery of the Year), I only discovered their rosé this year.

Nothing quite captures the perfect summer day like drinking a glass of chilled rosé on a patio. On the nose, sweet aromas of field berries and grapefruit are immediately noticeable. The bright citrus notes are even

Olivia Mazza

Lake Breeze - The Spice Jar, 2017

I spent part of this summer in the Okanagan Valley—arguably the best wine region in the country. After my two-week self-isolation period ended, I began visiting some of the wineries. My new-found favourite white wine is the Spice Jar from Lake Breeze, a gorgeous winery on the Naramata Bench. This is a fun blend of Gewürztraminer (30%), Ehrenfelser (30%), Viognier (29%), and Schönburger (20%) that has a lot of layers to it. It is a light, medium-bodied wine with notes of peaches and apples, but is more floral on the nose. It’s slightly spicy and it is recommended as the perfect pair for spicier dishes (hence the name), but you could also enjoy this on its own (the tasting guide referred to this as a “patio-pounder”). Unfortunately, this wine is not available at the LCBO, but if anyone would like to join me in writing a letter to the government to speed up the process of dismantling inter-provincial liquor restrictions, please don’t hesitate to get in touch.

Kimia Veisi Nezhad

Filipa and William’s Estate Vineyards “Dinamica” Baga, 2018

If you are looking for a delicious and easy-drinking red wine to enjoy on a date night or over an interesting conversation with a friend, “Dinamica” is a great choice. This wine is from the Bairrada region in Portugal, and is made 100 percent out of the rich Baga grapes. The name “Dinamica” perhaps refers to the biodynamic and organic viticulture methods that Filipa and William have incorporated into their vineyard. The grapes are handpicked, fully de-stemmed, and fermented in tanks with minimal extraction. This results in a delightful red with earthy, intense aromas. The medium-bodied wine is vibrant, fresh, acidic, high in tannins, and slightly spicy. I purchased this wine from Paradise Grapevine, a local wine bar and shop on Bloor Street West that specializes in organic, natural, and expressive wines produced by low-intervention producers. You can pick your unique bottle out of their wide selection and enjoy it on their lush patio for a small corkage fee, or take it home for a relaxing night. I would pair this wine with a creamy Camembert or Brie and some fresh sour-dough.
UV’s Guide to Ice Cream in Toronto

Ice cream, but not too sweet

ALEXA CHEUNG (2L), ANGELA GU (2L JD/MBA), ANNECY PANG (2L) AND ADRIENNE RALPH (2L)

Summer may be coming to an end, but ice cream is forever. Toronto has countless spots for frozen desserts, and this is our guide to some of our favourite places for ice cream, gelato, soft serve, and more. Find some of our favourites below, check out our full guide online at ultravires.ca.

Please confirm the hours of operation before going on your ice cream adventure — some are temporarily closed during the pandemic and others have limited hours.

Dainties
235 Spadina Ave Unit 2, Toronto, ON M5T 2E2

Guys, this place is amazing. I’ve been in Toronto less than a year, and I’ve had Dainties more than ten times. I’ve introduced so many friends to this place, and my rewards card is basically full. My love for this little Korean macaron place runs very, very deep.

They specialize in buttercream macarons, with a wide variety of your classic macaron flavours such as pistachio and vanilla bean, to Asian-inspired ones such as Injeolmi (Korean rice cake) and Dalgonha (the whipped coffee that’s been all the rage this summer). I love that these macarons aren’t too sweet, which allows the delicate flavours to shine through, rather than being overpowered by sugar. Contrary to their name, these macarons are anything but dainty - I’d say they’re about 1.5 times the size of a regular French macaron.

And that’s not all. Dainties also makes amazing ice cream macaron sandwiches. These are huge - I usually share one with a friend, and the staff are more than happy to slice it in half for you. The last time I was there, they had just introduced the Yuzu flavour, a bright and cheery Korean citrus fruit perfect for these hot and humid summers.

Kekou Gelato
394 Queen St W, Toronto, ON M5V 2A6

I mourned the closing of their Baldwin location. But fear not, their Queen West spot isn’t that far from campus, stop by on your way to a picnic at Trinity Bellwoods. Kekou carries a rotating range of Asian-inspired flavours, including classics like Vietnamese coffee and HK milk tea. Some flavours I’d recommend include whisky green tea, and peanut sesame. They even have durian gelato - a risky choice for the uninitiated, but perfectly on point for durian-lovers. I dream of their gelato and their wallpaper.

Nani’s Gelato
6 Charles St E, Toronto, ON M4Y 1T2

I first saw Nani’s when I was on an evening walk and just had to stop by for a scoop. Even if you get one scoop of gelato, you have the option of getting two flavours so that’s exactly what I did. The blueberry basil was creamy and not overwhelmingly basil-y. I was very tempted to pick up a pint of their gelato but I had to remind myself that my freezer had no room for yet another carton. Since that fateful evening, I’ve been back to the little shop many times and have spent way too much money there. I’m a big fan of their “sorbettos”: grape, mango passionfruit, blueberry lemonade, pear...the list goes on. The flavours at Nani’s rotate every week (check their Instagram on Mondays) so it’s a surprise every time!

Death in Venice
1418 Dundas St W, Toronto, ON M6J 1Y5

Founded by the 2015 winner of Chopped Canada and a family lawyer, Death in Venice features delicious gelato in a variety of creative flavours. I have only tried the Pistachio Yogurt Baklava and Ricotta Lemon Rosemary flavour (McEwan carries pints and scoops) and cannot wait to try more! There are also plenty of dairy-free flavours for my lactose-intolerant soul.

So far, I’ve only tried two Death in Venice flavours - Ricotta Lemon Rosemary and Strawberry Basil Lemon. Despite being labelled “Strawberry Basil Lemon” on the front of the tub, the strawberry flavour is somewhat confusingly listed on their website as “Strawberry Thai Basil Juniper”, and the ingredients list on the tub I have includes juniper berries and Thai basil, but not lemon. Nonetheless, this vegan, coconut milk-based flavour was impressively creamy. The basil flavour is quite strong, but balances well with the sweet tartness of the strawberry. I didn’t taste any notes of lemon—but I can’t be sure whether that’s because of my amateur tastebuds or an actual lack of lemon.

Visit ultravires.ca for the full Guide, featuring over 20 ice cream spots.
CLSA Blog in Print:
Tuning in to Criminal Law
Lawyering and true crime podcast picks, courtesy of the Criminal Law Students' Association

ADAM DAVIS (2L) AND EMILY HILL (2L)

The school year has just begun, but we know you are already looking for ways to procrastinate. Podcasts about true crime and criminal lawyering are a great resource for students interested in criminal law and a fun way to learn about facets of the criminal justice system. If you are not already on the crime podcast train, why not hop on board? Check out our top picks to get started!

Podcasts about criminal lawyering

Adam's Top Pick: Of Counsel
Of Counsel is hosted by Sean Robichaud, a criminal defence lawyer in Toronto. Throughout the podcast, Robichaud advocates for the use of social media by lawyers to give the legal community its own profile, to engage in social debates, and to stay informed.

Why you should listen:
While Of Counsel is not exclusively a criminal law podcast, the majority of interviews are with criminal law practitioners and discuss criminal justice issues. If you are interested in a career in criminal law, then these interviews with some of Canada's most accomplished members of the criminal bar are definitely worth a listen.

Notable interviews include conversations with Gerald Chan of Stockwoods LLP, discussing his numerous interventions at the Supreme Court of Canada. Robichaud also interviewed legendary criminal law practitioners like Brian H. Greenspan and Alan D. Gold. If you are looking to get a sense of why criminal lawyers do what they do, consider listening to the episode with Henrin Hutchinson LLP's Danielle Robitaille. Other interesting interviews include those with Michael Lacy (past President of the Criminal Lawyers' Association), Jordana Goldstein, Donald Bayne (counsel to Senator Mike Duffy in the Senate expenses scandal) and Amy Stoteck of Legal Aid Ontario.

Listener tip:
Robichaud usually starts the interview off with how or why the lawyer got into the practice of law, and then proceeds somewhat chronologically through their career. Any special highlights or thorny issues (such as those discussed in the episodes with Joseph Groia or Rocco Galati) are discussed closer to the end.

Adam's Runner Up: The Docket
The Docket is co-hosted by spouses and criminal lawyers, Emilie Taman and Michael Spratt. Taman clerked at the Supreme Court of Canada, worked as a Crown prosecutor, held teaching positions at the University of Ottawa, and, most recently, ran for the federal NDP in Ottawa-Centre—not to mention the fact that her mother was former Supreme Court Justice Louise Arbour. Spratt is a well-known Ottawa criminal defence lawyer who served as the past Director of the Criminal Lawyers' Association and frequently acts as an expert witness before the House of Commons.

Why you should listen:
It's not everyday that you'll find a podcast covering a cold case through to an arrest. Warning: listening to Up and Vanished might incite podcast binging behaviour and a deep desire to drop out of law school to work full-time on cracking a cold case.

Listener tip:
Edwards has been the subject of conspiracy theories that have pinned him to a range of homicide cases, including the infamous murder of JonBenêt Ramsey and the Zodiac killings. If you’ve been lost in these theories, try to put them aside and critically question what is fact and what is fiction as you listen along.

Emily's Top Pick: Up & Vanished (Season 1)
Up and Vanished investigates the 2005 disappearance of Tara Grinstead, a high school teacher and pageant queen from Ocilla, Georgia. With no answers for over 10 years, narrator Payne Lindsey takes matters into his own hands. Listen closely as Lindsey revisits the evidence and speaks with witnesses, locals, and potential suspects in this true crime case. Sometimes the smallest towns hold the biggest secrets.

Why you should listen:
It's not everyday that you’ll find a podcast covering a cold case through to an arrest. Warning: listening to Up and Vanished might incite podcast binging behaviour and a deep desire to drop out of law school to work full-time on cracking a cold case.

Listener tip:
Up and Vanished provides listeners with regular episodes, along with “case evidence” and “Q & A” episodes. If you’re interested in an in-depth look into certain pieces of evidence or want to hear questions and answers related to the case and the criminal law process, be sure to listen to all three episode types. If you just can’t wait and want to speed through, the regular episodes provide you with all you need to still follow along!

Emily’s Runner-Up: The Clearing
April Balascio knew that her father, Edward Wayne Edwards, was a bad man. He was abusive, a convicted bank robber, and a con artist. Still, she always felt that there was something more that she was missing. Balascio would wake up in the middle of the night with vague recollections of places her family had been or things that she had seen as a child, and begin a whirlwind of Google searches for answers. Every time she would come up empty, until one day she stumbled upon a double homicide case that seemed far too familiar. After an anonymous tip, her worst fears were confirmed.

This podcast explores the life and crimes of Edwards and, more importantly, the life of Balascio, the daughter of a serial killer who still desperately wants to know the full truth about her father.

Why you should listen:
Beyond the narrative following Edwards, The Clearing gives listeners unique insight into how family members of convicted killers are impacted by these crimes.

Listener tip:
While The Clearing is not exclusively a true crime podcast, the majority of interviews are with criminal law practitioners like Brian H. Greenspan and Alan D. Gold. If you’re interested in an in-depth look into certain pieces of evidence or want to hear questions and answers related to the case and the criminal law process, be sure to listen to all three episode types. If you just can’t wait and want to speed through, the regular episodes provide you with all you need to still follow along!

Podcasts about true crime

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This series by the Criminal Law Students’ Association introduces the law student body to the wild, wild world of criminal law and criminal justice. Articles will be published in print in Ultra Vires as well as on the CLSA’s website, uoftclsa.utoronto.ca/blog. To pitch an article to the CLSA blog series, please contact the CLSA Blog Editor, Teodora Pasca, at teodora.pasca@mail.utoronto.ca.

They may possibly would’ve written for Ultra Vires if it had existed.

Ultra Vires: Since 1999. Submit pieces to editor@ultravires.ca
Law students at the Faculty of Law are given an option this year: either attend classes partially in-person or fully remotely due to COVID-19. According to a survey of the first year class, 25 students out of 212 enrolled, or 12 percent, are learning online exclusively. And it’s not just L1s who are attending remotely. Three students residing outside of Ontario, Jiayi Wang (1L), Joseph Mercado (2L) and Vivian Cheng (2L), shared their perspectives on online learning with Ultra Vires.

This story holds special meaning to me. I am one of the L1 students studying exclusively remotely. This was not on purpose. After studying in Vancouver, BC, for six years, I flew back to Hong Kong for Christmas and Chinese New Year last December. It was supposed to be a three-month trip until the pandemic hit and ballooned across North America. Later, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada imposed travel restrictions on international students, singling out those who applied for a study permit after March 18, 2020. Because I applied for my study permit in April, I am currently banned from traveling to Toronto.

When I contacted the admissions office at the Faculty of Law, I was given two choices. Either apply for an admission deferment or attend classes remotely from Hong Kong, without lecture recordings. This was a choice between bad and worse. But, I had to make a decision, so I chose to do remote classes so I could begin law school earlier in my life.

The 12-hour time zone difference between Toronto and Hong Kong poses a big challenge. Most of my classes end at 3:30 pm EDT and therefore, I stay up until 5 am HKT on most weekdays. Though it is three weeks into the school term, I am still constantly adjusting my sleep schedule. I tried different strategies to adjust my biological clock, including taking sleeping pills, doing bedtime yoga, and eating late at night. Although it sounds stressful to turn night into day, I am enjoying my time in Hong Kong more than I expected. I can spend some time with my family and reunite with my local friends. Also, when I study late at night, I feel a sense of calm and am less easily distracted.

Taking classes from the hospital

Jiayi Wang (1L) is in Guangzhou, China, which is 12 hours ahead of Toronto. She found out about the travel restrictions in early July, after she quit her full-time job. Due to the difficulty of finding a new job during a global pandemic, she decided to study remotely instead of deferring her offer.

She took the intensive Legal Methods course in quite an unexpected location: the hospital. A week before the first class, she sustained a serious ankle injury from skateboarding. Consequently, she received surgery and was hospitalized for the duration of the course.

“Even though it was a tough start, Professor Yasmin Danwood was very understanding of my situation. She gave me lots of advice and assistance. For instance, I had to skip a few classes. Professor Danwood shared her slides with me and guided me through the important details. I would have collapsed without her assurance and moral support,” says Jiayi.

She was discharged from the hospital last week and is now recovering. Due to her injury, she is struggling to maintain a regular sleep schedule, which is occasionally interrupted by physiotherapy and doctor appointments. In general, she also found the inability to meet her classmates in person stressful. She is using social media and online club activities to make friends. Assistant Dean Alec Archbold and Terry Gardiner from Student Mental Health and Wellness are invaluable resources navigating mental resources and accommodations for her injury.

“They are all my life savers,” says Jiayi.

Turning Challenges into Opportunities

While many students find remote classes challenging and prefer in-person attendance, some see remote classes as an opportunity, and deliberately choose this option. Joseph Mercado, a 2L student, is one of them. He decided to study remotely because he wanted to stay in Alberta. He is planning to practice in Calgary after law school and would like to network there in preparation for the Calgary recruit. Further, he is skeptical about the chances of a COVID-19 outbreak in Toronto and is worried that classes could switch to Zoom at any time during the semester.

After experiencing remote learning last semester, he found himself adjusting well to it, even though it may be difficult to contribute ideas during class. In particular, some professors avoid making in-person interactions after classes due to health concerns. But when professors are willing to stay after Zoom classes for a Q and A session, this online learning setting allows him to listen to professors’ responses to his classmates’ questions, which is not possible in the traditional classroom setting.

Furthermore, Joseph recognized some social and mental benefits from taking online classes. He enjoys walking his dog in between classes in the nice weather. He cherishes the chance to hang out with his Calgary friends while maintaining social interactions with his law school friends remotely.

Nonetheless, he does prefer in-person socialization at law school. When asked about what he would like to do when he is back on campus, he said, “hang out with my friends at Wow Sushi.”

Creating a unique remote learning experience

Remote studying can also provide you the opportunity to live in a foreign country. Vivian Cheng (2L), one of Ultra Vires’ Co-Editors-in-Chief this year, is living in California. She deliberately decided to study remotely because she loves California.

“The weather is nice and the surrounding environment is beautiful,” she says. She is currently visiting San Francisco, staying at a friend’s place. As she is no longer bound physically by the law school, she appreciates the chance to take stretch breaks between classes and she can now exercise more frequently throughout the day. However, California is three hours behind Ontario and she has to wake up early in the morning for classes – as early as 6 am to attend Business Organizations every Wednesday.

Since she is a very social person, the biggest challenge she faces with online learning is the loss of in-person interaction with her law school friends. As a result, she has a fear of missing out, especially the fun parts of law school. To accommodate the mental stress, she takes proactive measures to maintain a tight connection with the law school, such as talking with professors after class, chatting with her law school friends daily, and getting involved with Ultra Vires.

Vivian says she would like to “chat with my friends in person” once she is back on campus.

Law school is different for everyone this year. The pandemic is changing everybody’s experience. But, for the students in far away cities from Calgary to San Francisco to Hong Kong, this semester looks, feels, and is indeed very different.
This year has certainly been unusual. The U of T community made the best of summer 2020 and did a lot of cool things! Ultra Vires was able to sit down to chat with some of our community. Below are interviews with Charlotte Butler, Anna Zhang, Maggie Arai, and Davina Shrivatan.

Charlotte Butler (2L), Dr0ppesh0ppe
Charlotte sells hand-made earrings and necklaces through her Instagram account. Her crafts are priced between $10 and $15 and half of the proceeds go to organizations dedicated to racial justice. To this day, Charlotte has made over 170 pairs of earrings, including gifts for her friends.

Ultra Vires (UV): What brought you into making earrings and necklaces? How did you learn?
Charlotte Butler (CB): I have loved crafting since elementary school. I went to an arts day camp, and that was where I learned about beading, clay, and jewelry-making. In elementary school, my mom bought me some bakeable polymer clay, called Sculpey, and my friend and I became obsessed with making Harry Potter figurines at sleepovers. I am drawn to tactile activities when I feel stressed about school. I started embroidering during my final year of undergrad, and I took up knitting last winter. Last December during my 1L exams, I decided to make Sculpey earrings. I had seen something on Instagram, so I made a bunch feverishly and gave some away for Christmas.

UV: Was that when you started Dr0ppesh0ppe?
CB: No, not yet — I initially put the rest of the earrings I made in storage. I did not think the first batch would be good to sell, but when the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement gained momentum in June, I started thinking about earrings again. Like a lot of people, I felt confused about how to contribute in a meaningful way. I decided to try to sell some earrings I had made and promised to donate 100 percent of the proceeds to BLM-related organizations.

That was when I made an Instagram account called Dr0pSh0ppe, added some of my friends who I thought might be interested, and posted the first bunch of earrings on June 7. I was amazed by the response. The 11 pairs I posted sold out that afternoon and people directly messaged me on Instagram saying they wanted more. I continued getting more specific requests for earrings — lemons, cherries, ice cream cones — so I made those too and posted them as “custom orders.” It was busy!

UV: How were donations handled and which organizations have you been donating to?
CB: I initially had people either send me a receipt of their donation in order to secure a pair of earrings, or donate to me directly and I would make a donation on their behalf. The first organizations I donated to were For the Gworls, Assata’s Daughters (in Chicago), and Taking What We Need.

Eventually adjusted the donation amount to 50 percent, because I was spending a fair amount of time making earrings and I had to pay for extra materials. I decided I wanted to focus on Toronto-based organizations, so I donated to the Black Legal Action Centre, Oceama Collective (a community-directed organization that supports Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour birthworkers) and Black Creek Community Farm (an urban agricultural centre that empowers diverse communities through sustainable food). It was a great way to learn about Toronto-based organizations that support the BLM movement.

UV: How do donations work and which organizations have you been donating to?

Annie Zhang (2L), Keys for COVID

Anna started Keys for COVID to fund-raise for food banks during the pandemic. In return for donations, she creates piano or instrumental covers that people request. At time of writing, Keys for Covid has raised $3,750. The project’s Instagram page features videos Anna has made so far, and she plans on adding new content during the school year.

UV: Has the pandemic affected you as an artist? How do you think the music community has coped with it?
AZ: It was comforting to go back to Alberta to live with my family, and I had a piano back home (I just got one for my Toronto place as well to keep making covers for the project). The whole experience brought me closer to people. I reconnected with friends I grew up with in the music comm
Maggie Arai (2L), Vagabond Cookies

Maggie and her partner’s Vagabond Cookies takes only 100 orders each month. Other than baking and developing new flavours, they also post mouthwatering images of a difference the toffee bits make in SKOR bits. You’d be surprised how huge of a difference the toffee bits make in terms of flavour! It’s stuffed full of milk chocolate chips, semi-sweet chocolate chips, and SKOR bits. You’d be surprised how huge of a difference the toffee bits make in terms of flavour!

UV: What were the most interesting or difficult songs you have been requested to cover?
AZ: Mo Bamba by Sheck Wes. It was almost the same note over and over, so I resolved to banging different kitchen stuff to create sounds that make the cover interesting. Being in a lockdown made me more creative—I used breadcrumbs for tuning and incorporated the sound of aluminum foil.

UV: Keys for COVID has been featured in multiple news articles including CTV News Edmonton. Do you have any marketing-related advice for students trying to start their entrepreneurial projects?
AZ: I reached out to several media outlets and no one got back to me for weeks at first. Then the Edmonton Journal contacted me out of the blue and published the first news piece about Keys for COVID. The other outlets just followed suit. It was easy after the first one, so my advice would be—I know this sounds cheesy but—don’t be afraid of rejections!

UV: Do you have any flavour recommendations for your cookies?
Maggie Arai (MA): Definitely “The Safe Option.” That’s the only flavour that we have every single month, and it’s amazing. Everyone we have met so far is obsessed with it. It’s stuffed full of milk chocolate chips, semi-sweet chocolate chips, and SKOR bits. You’d be surprised how huge of a difference the toffee bits make in terms of flavour!

UV: Many of us tried to pick up baking during the lockdown and were not all successful. How did you start baking cookies? Did you have any tips for aspiring bakers?
MA: I’ve been baking these cookies for about two years because my partner is obsessed with cookies. I think for the two of us the lockdown really changed things because suddenly we had a lot more free time. We’re both pretty entrepreneurial, so we jumped at the chance to try (yet another) business!

In terms of tips for aspiring bakers, my lockdown experience taught me [...] don’t make sourdough! Just kidding, everyone else but me should totally try this. But in my case, I think I just ended up growing a jar of horrid smelling gunk in my oven.

UV: How has the pandemic affected Vagabond?
MA: It has definitely affected shipping for Vagabond. At the moment, we are paying for a faster shipping option than we would technically need if all shipments were on time. Obviously, since we’re dealing with an edible product, we want people to receive the cookies when they’re as fresh as possible! We hope that eventually, once shipping times return to normal, shipping will be less expensive for our customers (particularly the ones outside of Ontario)!

UV: Any fun stories about baking or running Vagabond Cookies?
MA: Every month we offer three different flavours: the Safe Option, a New Option, and a Mystery Option in which you don’t know what you’re going to get. We try to create something that’s totally different from cookies you can get anywhere else. It is really hard to be 100 percent unique with food, because a lot of the flavours haven’t been done for good reason. The very first Mystery flavour I tried to develop was a Nutella Cheeto flavour. We kept videos of Ademola (my partner) and I dipping flaming hot Cheetos into a jar of Nutella to see if the combination would work. The surprising thing was that it totally did! The unsurprising thing was that trying to translate that into a cookie involved weeks of attempts, several unlucky taste-testers, a whole lot of imagination, and ultimately, total failure. Somewhere in my heart, though, I still really want to make this flavour work. Someday.

Davina Shivratan (JD/MBA 2020), Law-Links

Davina and her sister, Nadia, started Law-Links to connect law students to volunteer opportunities. Over 400 students from 16 law schools across Canada have registered with the non-profit initiative. Davina and Nadia have matched students with over 100 projects since May.

UV: What inspired you to start Law-Links?
Davina Shivratan (DS): I graduated from U of T in April and Nadia from Windsor Law. Nadia thought she was lucky enough to have a job that had not been cancelled due to COVID-19, but many of her friends were left with nothing to do. I love running businesses and have always wanted to do something before starting my job in New York.

We figured Law-Links would be a good idea now that students were looking for summer opportunities, and organizations needed help on projects.

UV: How long did it take you between coming up with the idea and starting Law-Links?
DS: A day or less! Right after we came up with the idea, we put together a website and finished the nonprofit registration process. That was in early May. We didn’t overthink it; if you don’t start working on an interesting idea, it may never happen.

Our business backgrounds helped quite a bit. My sister is good at marketing and design. I focused on setting up a matching process. We managed to be up and running within 24 hours. We had quite a lot of interest from students early on, so we took on volunteers to help reach out to lawyers and organizations throughout the summer.

UV: What were some of the channels you used for marketing or reaching out?
DS: We did a lot of social media marketing and also relied on our personal network. The Faculty of Law was also very supportive.

LinkedIn is a useful platform if you are a law student interested in entrepreneurship. You can find and connect with law professionals who have chosen entrepreneurship as a career interest. They understand the challenges involved and are usually willing to help.

UV: Do you have any advice for law students interested in starting their own projects?
DS: You just have to do it. The downside is minimal, and it is completely fine to fail.

Take advantage of all the resources. U of T is associated with a few startup incubators; and Ryerson hosts Legal Innovation Zone, a legal tech incubator that provides free training.

Within the JD/MBA program, I did the externship with Rotman’s Creative Destruction Lab and worked with a startup. I also recommend the Not-for-Profit Board Governance Clinic offered through the law school and Rotman Commerce, where you get the chance to help an organization’s Board of Directors solve real problems. These interviews have been edited for brevity and clarity.
Earlier this month I (virtually) sat down one-by-one with Orientation Coordinators Branden Cave (2L), Thryn Irwin (2L), and Meruba Sivaselvachandran (2L JD/MBA) to find out more about what running a highly unprecedented O-week entailed. Their answers are compiled below, divulging unexpected positives, behind-the-scenes bumps, and some tentative ideas on giving 1A a more normal O-Week experience in January.

Ultra Vires (UV): What was your first thought when it was announced that orientation was going to be a largely online/hybrid model?

Branden Cave (BC): It’s going to be challenging. I think one of the concerns we had was that we weren’t too sure what kind of funding we would have this year. Thankfully, we still got a substantial amount of support from the firms, but the nice thing about having online events is that they were a lot less expensive. So from a logistical and financial side, we thought, “okay, this might balance itself out.”

Thryn Irwin (TI): I knew this year we would have to have a lot more structure to actually get first years to interact with people. I think that was my first thought, that it was going to be more work in some regards to try to keep that same level of community.

Meruba Sivaselvachandran (MS): I was nervous about being able to do the 1A justice. Obviously, we wanted them to have fun, but this was a totally new task. I was also excited about the prospect of this being more challenging and having the freedom to do whatever we saw fit.

UV: Besides the obvious, what are some ways that you had to change your approach to orientation in order to foster the usual sense of excitement and community in the 1Ls this year?

BC: Yeah, I think one of the things students are going to hear a lot of times this year is “Oh, it was so much better, so different in person last year, you’re missing out on that.” They are missing out and they’re well aware of that, so we had to stay positive and kind of make sure everyone put on a happy face.

MS: It was different this year because we introduced pods (random groups of 12-13 students from the same Legal Methods class), so we had to change our programming approach knowing that people wouldn’t get to meet as many people. We had to make sure we kept Zoom break-out rooms random and figure out how to keep someone who was completely online engaged and excited about doing more online stuff.

UV: Were there any unexpected positives or benefits of having the activities online and distanced?

BC: They didn’t have to commute back to the law school once they’d gone home, so I think there was a bit more attendance from that side. We saw a bit of attrition in attendance from people just not wanting to be on another Zoom call for another hour though.

TI: Last year, many events were drinking-oriented and I think that kind of pushed some people away, so it was a benefit to reach out to some people who might be interested in a more structured event.

MS: I think the students had really low expectations [laughs], so it was really nice that the first years were really appreciative, and grateful, and were just happy to be able to have fun and do stuff. Also, we’re hoping it generated more conversations and was less anxiety-inducing than potentially going out to a mixer, and not knowing anyone going.

UV: Are there any events that you held for the first time this year that you would love to see introduced again in future orientations or found to have worked better online?

BC: The SLS held a 1L town hall which gave students the chance to meet the SLS, raise some concerns they already had this year (there was no lack of concerns) and then also get some information on elections. Anything we can use to get more information from the student organizations to the 1Ls is always a good thing.

TI: If we can do what we did in a virtual environment, just imagine what you could do next year when hopefully, hopefully, hopefully, it’s not virtual again.

MS: I would say, if you want to do it, do it because you’re excited about the idea. Just make sure you’re doing it for the right reasons and you’ll have a lot of fun with it.

UV: Anything you want to add that I didn’t address?

TI: One thing I could mention is that we are tentatively thinking of doing a mini Frost-week. So, if COVID relents, the three of us were thinking of throwing a pub-appetizers-Firkin type event where the first years can have a more orientation type of experience in January.

These interviews have been condensed for brevity and clarity.
Dear Readers,

The start of the 2020-2021 academic year was already going to be difficult for us all considering the challenges inherent to this global pandemic. We, as Rights Review Magazine’s Editorial Board, did not expect our home, the International Human Rights Program (IHRP), to be under threat from our own Faculty. We are dedicating our first editorial comment of the year to address our serious concerns with the decision to rescind Dr. Valentina Azarova’s offer to join our program as the new Director.

On September 17, news broke in both the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail revealing allegations against Dean Edward Iacobucci that he rescinded Dr. Azarova’s offer of employment after a phone call with a sitting judge in the Tax Court of Canada. The Dean insists that these allegations are false. However, the entire IHRP Hiring Committee and the entire faculty advisory board have signed in response to the decision not to hire Dr. Azarova.

Speaking truth to power, as Dr. Azarova has done, is increasingly being embraced around the world is increasingly being embraced. Legal professionals committed to meaningful, historical, and evidence-based advocacy for human rights are false. However, the entire IHRP Hiring Committee and the entire faculty advisory board have signed in response to the decision not to hire Dr. Azarova.

We unequivocally stand behind the well-supported understanding of Vincent Wong and those close to this case: that Dr. Azarova was offered the position; that the Faculty initially supported this decision; that immigration lawyers were preparing her travel to Toronto; and that suddenly and without explanation the Dean rescinded this offer. There is good reason to believe based on the facts that external influence played a role in the Dean’s change of heart. If true, it is unacceptable that the administration would allow outside pressures to corrode the due process and internal decision made by the IHRP Hiring Committee and faculty advisory board.

Equally alarming is the allegation that Dr. Azarova’s scholarship on Israel’s human rights abuses and occupation of Palestinian territories was the key cause for concern. Just this past year, the IHRP spearheaded the Media Freedom Model Laws Project, calling attention to how freedom of speech around the world is increasingly being muzzled in a disturbing and unchecked fashion. Speaking truth to power, as Dr. Azarova has done, with her conscientious criticisms of Israel’s illegal settlements, is something that ought to be celebrated at the Faculty, not scorned. To rescind an offer of employment without providing proper reasons is to offend the IHRP’s integrity and progressive leadership. The allegations that external influence from a donor was behind this decision further tarnishes this integrity. Under no circumstances should high-placed alumni donors affect hiring decisions at the IHRP or the Faculty, writ large.

The lack of transparency surrounding this process and vacancies in the IHRP leadership also overly burden the sole remaining staff member, Research Associate Ashley Major. Human rights work is a taxing field of the law; vicarious trauma, financial precarity, and burnout are well-documented challenges for legal professionals committed to meaningful work. That Vincent Wong felt it necessary to resign in light of this situation, and that the IHRP is left with a single staff member to shoulder its heavy workload, is unacceptable. The conduct of the Faculty administration thus far demonstrates a lack of consideration for IHRP staff and, by extension, the important advocacy training that the program provides students.

We stand behind the statements provided by the Students’ Law Society and the group of IHRP students and alumni calling for transparency and prompt resolution of this instability in the IHRP. As the student-led magazine that has closely worked with the IHRP for 12 years, Rights Review has reported on the program’s illustrious history and worked directly with the brilliant staff and student network connected to the IHRP. We are concerned about the impact of these events on the efficacy of the IHRP. We call on the law school’s administration to consider the effects of their decision on the quality of the IHRP’s human rights advocacy offerings to the student body and to work out a swift and just solution. Together, we root our work in principles of justice, freedom, and transparency. The alleged conduct of Dean Iacobucci, if true, fails to uphold these values and must be righted immediately.

Sincerely,

Rights Review Magazine Editorial Board

WORKING WITH THE #UYGHURTHREE
THE IMPORTANCE OF CLIENT CENTERED WORK AND TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

By Alexa Cheung (2L), Maddie Andrew-Gee (2L) and Rachel Bryce (4L JD/MGA)

Our summer working at the University of Toronto’s Downtown Legal Services (DLS) Refugee and Immigration Law Division involved spending a significant amount of our time with three men: Abyilu Abdulahad, Khalil Mamut, and Salahidin Abdulahad. These men, whose cases became combined under the hashtag “#UyghurThree,” have experienced inimaginable pain and trauma in both the United States and Canada.

Aspects of their stories have appeared in the Toronto Star, and op-eds on themes surrounding their stories were published over the summer. Looking back at our work on their files, what stands out the most to us is the continued pain caused by the prolonged process of wrongful detention and the recounting of traumatic stories to government, media, and our clients. We learned important lessons about client-centered, trauma-informed practice, and the need to demonstrate the humanity of these men and their families that powerful actors failed to recognize.

The complexity of inadmissibility cases

Cases involving inadmissibility concerns are among the most challenging in refugee and immigration (RI) law. Prasanna Balasundaram, our staff lawyer, led us as we immersed ourselves in this area of practice to get up to speed and understand where these cases have been and where they were going.

As a brief primer, sections 34 to 39 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) outline the possible grounds for inadmissibility to Canada, spanning from security and criminality to health and financial reasons. Our clients face potential inadmissibility pursuant to subsections 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(c), which holds:

34 (1) A permanent resident or a foreign national is inadmissible on security grounds for […]
(c) engaging in terrorism; […]
(f) being a member of an organization that there are reasonable grounds to believe engages, has engaged or will engage in acts referred to in paragraph (a), (b), (b.1) or (c).

The Government of Canada bases this potential inadmissibility on the same facts that underlie the U.S.’s wrongful detention of Mohammed, Mamut, and Abdulahad in Guantanamo Bay. These facts were ultimately dismissed, which led to the men’s exoneration and eventual release from Guantanamo Bay.

We learned from these brave men and their families how uncertain and opaque the decision-making in these inadmissibility processes is. Months would go by without any communication, despite multiple attempts to correspond with the relevant offices and receive necessary disclosures to best represent our clients. When we did hear from these offices, we would receive scant information and seemingly baseless allegations of non-credibility. This process was exasperating us as caseworkers, and it terrified our clients.

“Why do they not believe us?” “How can we convince them of our innocence?”

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“Why do they not believe us?” “How can we convince them of our innocence?”
“I would never do what they are saying I did.” We heard our clients repeat these devastating lines with each delay and negative reply. It was our job to reassure them that we were doing all that we could to convey their innocence and establish an undeniable record supporting their stories. It was our job to explain seemingly inexplicable actions by the government.

The black mark of Guantanamo Bay still hangs over their heads. The whispers of “terrorism” haunt them. As one of our clients shared, they are the victims of politics; they are caught in a heated geopolitical mess with which they have no involvement. Being at the wrong place at the wrong time two decades ago has defined and derailed their entire adult lives.

The emotional toll

Facing this uncertainty and incessant delay, we next faced the conundrum: do we go to the media and share our clients’ sensitive stories with a potentially unfor- 
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The emotional toll

During the interviews, we were responsible for following along and ensuring that the narratives remained consistent with the legal record. Despite this relatively minimal role, the emotional toll of our work was significant. In the RI division, many clients have undergone unspeakable pain and suffering in their home country, just to encounter more difficulties during the process of migration and seeking status in their new countries. In this sense, the cases of Mohammed, Mamut, and Abdulahad did not differ much from our other clients. Due to the nature of the media campaign and the frequency with which we interacted with the men and their wives, we developed strong emotional attachments to their cases.

Hearing their stories of trauma and suffering time and time again was difficult for us as student caseworkers, and it became essential to recognize and manage the vicarious trauma stemming from our work. Since we were working closely together, we were able to discuss the emotional impacts of our work, check in with each other, and debrief after each interview. Having these open and honest discussions was extremely helpful, as we were able to support each other and share the emotional burden of our work.

Client-centered and trauma-informed practice

Through complicated legal questions and painful vicarious trauma, we developed an instinctual understanding of the importance of maintaining a client-centered and trauma-informed practice. Focusing on our clients’ lived experiences ensured stronger relationships between our team and the men, establishing trust and mutual comprehension. Working with trauma-informed lenses created more compassionate communication with our clients, gently pointing to certain painful steps that needed to be faced, while always allowing for breaks and compromises to not push them too far.

However deeply we rooted our practice in our clients’ experiences and an awareness of their traumas, we still ran up against unforeseen challenges. After a few particularly difficult interviews, our clients emphasized the toll speaking about aspects of their past were taking on their mental and physical health. Our desire to advocate and push these stories publicly put added stress on the men, despite doing all we could to care for these potential side effects of our work.

Among the most meaningful lessons learned this summer is the importance of building trust with clients. Once we established a strong rapport, we navigated these difficult legal and media questions together. We were able to communicate the significance of what our team hoped to do and each of our clients understood and were willing to push forward. Without these relationships formed through client-centered and trauma-informed practice, we may not have been able to advocate as effectively and as creatively. Our clients understood how much we cared and expressed hope for the future, if only because of our team’s dedicated and forward-looking work.
THE VENEZUELA ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT: AN INTERVIEW WITH ASHLEY MAJOR

ADDRESsing THE NEED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

By Sabrina Sukhdeo (L2)

Over the last six years, the regime of Venezue- lan President Nicolás Maduro has waged a brutal campaign of repression against the Venezuelan people. The United Nations recently released a report declaring that the grave human rights violations against anti-government protesters in fact amounted to crimes against humanity. Addressing the pressing need for accountability, Research Associate Ashley Major is spearheading the University of Toronto’s involvement in the Venezuela Accountability Project. The student-led project will be a collaboration with the Global Accountability Network, the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights at Mc- Gill University, and other partners across the world.

Rights Review (RR): What is the Global Accountability Network (GAN)?

Ashley Major (AM): The GAN is a group of international human rights practitioners who supervise law students working on specific atrocity projects. GAN currently operates three accountability projects: Syria, Yemen, and now, Venezuela. GAN lawyers collaborate with local partners in each conflict region to determine research aims and priorities. The law students assigned to each project then engage in open-source investigatory analysis regarding alleged war crimes and/or crimes against humanity. The ultimate goal of each project is to gather evidence that can one day help to contribute to justice for victims, accountability for perpetrators, and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms in the future.

RR: What are some of the biggest challenges associated with this project, speaking in terms of both the Venezuela context and accountability projects generally?

AM: There are many challenges with projects such as these. Such undertakings are massive and are difficult to get off the ground. We have dozens of members to coordinate from U of T, McGill University, Florida International University, and the Global Accountability Network. There is also a lack of institutional mem- ory to pass on to new trainees; everyone, in- cluding myself, is starting from scratch. It will take a long time, likely longer than this aca- demic year, to transform the research of our volunteers into publishable work products.

Regarding the Venezuela context specifi- cally, realistically defining the temporal and structural limits of VAP is certainly a chal- lenge. There are thousands of pages of open- source documents relating to the atrocities of the Maduro regime. Such atrocities have al- ready taken place over the course of several years. An investigation into this regime could be unending. It is difficult to strike the delicate balance of ensuring that the research is thor- ough and manageable.

Additionally, our project may face language barriers. Although many of our volunteers speak Spanish, a lack of English sources and a need for translation services may create tim- ing and accuracy concerns.

Because of COVID-19, all of our training sessions and interactions with group mem- bers and partners will take place online. Build- ing camaraderie is difficult without face-to- face interactions. Additionally, the ability to obtain evidence from Venezuelan activists and witnesses will also likely be impacted by travel bans and safety concerns for everyone involved.

In light of all of these concerns, I’ve been very honest with the students volunteering on this project that our first year is likely going to be a difficult learning process for us all and for everyone involved. And that’s okay! If ev- eryone goes in with realistic expectations, this year will be a meaningful and worthwhile expe- rience for all.

RR: What does GAN hope to accomplish from this project in both the short term and long term?

AM: In the short term, GAN intends to gather evidence of human rights violations, conduct legal analysis, and create criminal dossiers on individuals suspected of committing crimes against humanity. GAN hopes to keep a spotlight on the situation in Venezuela, as much has happened in 2020 to take the focus away.

In the long term, GAN hopes that the evi- dence gathered will assist with criminal pros- ecutions for those from Venezuela who have committed atrocities. The ultimate hope is that VAP will contribute to justice for victims, accountability for perpetrators, and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms in the future.

RR: What pattern of the abuse was targeted at political dis- senters under their care.

AM: One pattern that emerges in times of con- flict and civil unrest is that civilian populations are often targeted with impunity. This holds particularly true for women and girls. The situ- ation in Venezuela is no different. Female po- litical protesters and human rights defenders have experienced gender-based threats of sexualised violence. Many who have been de- fient and were subjected to violence have al- legedly been raped, sexually assaulted, and tortured. The precarious economic state of the country has also left many women and girls vulnerable to being trafficked and sex- ually exploited.

The lack of access to adequate healthcare, medication, and social services also dispro- portionately harms Venezuelan women. Wom- en are often responsible for affordable basic needs and safe, legal abortions. Many Venezuelan wom- en risk secret, unsafe abortions in an attempt to avoid criminal charges. Many die each year. As a result of a lack of prenatal care, the rates of infant and maternal mortality have skyrocketed in Venezuela over the past sev- eral years. Thousands of pregnant women have had to flee to neighbouring states in or- der to receive adequate care and to safely give birth. However, such journeys are arduous and can be harmful for pregnant women. The lack of nutrition and monitoring throughout pregnancies can also lead to complications for both mother and fetus.

Women also experience the most extreme forms of poverty, as they are paid less than men and are often primarily responsible for caring for children. Venezuela’s failing econo- my and shortage of supplies has made it diffi- cult for women to obtain formula, diapers, clothing, and food for the many family mem- bers under their care.

RR: International efforts to advance human rights are often criticized as a form of Western imperialism. How does an endeavour like VAP evade that sort of criticism?

AM: This is a fair critique of international law and human rights, but it is one that anyone who practices international law needs to en- gage with critically. Which states were present at the table when determining the content of international conventions, and which weren’t? Whose laws contributed to the body of cus- tomary international law, and whose didn’t? Who has international law historically target- ed, and who has it historically protected?

A project such as this could easily be yet another example of Western imperialism. My colleagues and I are working diligently to en- sure that it will not be. GAN lawyers have fos- tered and developed strong relationships with Venezuelan activists and lawyers over the past several years. We will be working directly with these individuals to identify research fo- cuses and priorities. We will examine both in- tense to a crime against armies of redress with local lawyers. In our training, we will also explore critical theories of international law, such as Third World Approaches to Interna- tional Law (TWAIL). Ultimately, our goal is to use our privilege and resources to assist with long-term grassroots efforts to hold this regime to account.

RR: How will U of T students be involved in VAP?

AM: U of T students will be leading this proj- ect under my direct supervision, and under the supervision of GAN as a whole. Our plan is to have VAP function as a multi-year, student-led project, where student researchers from the previous school year will fill the leadership positions the following year.

This summer, I put out an upper-year ap- plication call for several leadership positions. I filled all of these positions in late August, and then recruited U of T students through the Clinics Recruitment Letter. Students chosen for VAP will undergo several training sessions throughout October on topics relating to the Venezuelan context and criminal international law investigations. Approximately 50 students will take part in the project.

VAP is made up of three divisions. The Invest- igations Division is responsible for finding and assembling open-source information on alleged crimes against humanity. One group of students in this division will identify whether or not the necessary elements of allegations are present, and document them in a crime- based matrix. Another group will draft out a conflict narrative spanning the temporal time- line of our inquiry.

The Intelligence Division will take the work of the Investigations Division and develop it more fully. One group of students will identify the most egregious incidents and conduct legal analysis as to whether they equate to a crime against humanity. Another group of students will identify and research high-ranking individuals who are alleged to be the most responsible for these violations.

The Registrar Division will take the work of the Intelligence Division and turn it into re- ports and white papers. A subset of students in this group will also undertake ad hoc re- search assignments for GAN lawyers.

While our project is full for this year, please keep an eye out for our work over the course of the year. Recruitment for next year will take place near the end of the Winter Term.
AN UNSAFE THIRD COUNTRY:
AN ANALYSIS OF CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES V CANADA (IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP)

By Ainslie Pierrynowski (2L)

The Federal Court of Canada’s decision in Canadian Council for Refugees v Canada (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship), released on July 22, 2020, signalled that the legislative provisions enacting the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) between Canada and the United States unjustifiably infringed the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The decision has meaningful implications for both refugee claimants in Canada and asylum seekers globally.

What is the STCA?

The STCA is an international agreement between Canada and the United States which came into effect in 2002. Under the STCA, asylum seekers who arrive at a land port of entry (POE) in either country must make their claim in the first country they come to — Canada or the United States, with certain exceptions. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) and its regulations give effect to the STCA.

How did this case come about?

The applicants were citizens of El Salvador, Ethiopia, and Syria who sought asylum in Canada after arriving from the United States at a Canadian land POE. These applicants were subsequently deemed ineligible to make a refugee claim due to the STCA. The respondents were the Federal Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, as well as the federal Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

The case hinged on the applicants’ argument that the STCA violated their Charter rights. The applicants claimed that the STCA violated section 7 of the Charter. The applicants argued that the STCA was overbroad and disproportionate. Regarding overbreadth, they found that the deprivation of the applicants’ liberty had no meaningful connection to the purpose of the STCA — that is, sharing responsibility for processing refugee claims. In her words, “[t]he evidence demonstrates that the immediate consequence to ineligible STCA claimants is that they will be imprisoned solely for having attempted to make a refugee claim in Canada. The “sharing of responsibility” objective of the STCA should entail some guarantee of access to a fair refugee process.”

Justice McDonald also found that the STCA was grossly disproportionate, since the negative effects of the STCA outweighed its purposes. She wrote that the experience of one particular applicant alone was sufficient to “shock the conscience.”

Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) officials returned asylum seekers whose claims were ineligible to authorities in the United States under the STCA. Given the conditions asylum seekers experienced in numerous United States detention facilities, Justice McDonald concluded, there was a causal correlation between the legislative provisions enacting the STCA and the infringement of the applicants’ section 7 rights.

Next, on section 1, the respondents argued that the pressing and substantial objective of the legislation enacting the STCA — the sharing of responsibility for refugee claimants — would not be met if the legislation was to be found unconstitutional. They drew attention to the sustainability of Canada’s refugee system should the number of claimants increase. Justice McDonald, however, found that the evidence for this argument was weak. She wrote that, historically, “Canada has demonstrated flexibility to adjust to fluctuations in refugee numbers in response to needs.”

The respondents also claimed that the STCA minimally impaired the applicants’ section 7 rights. The respondents argued that a fair review of the applicants’ detention in the United States was available, pointing to the fact that the applicants were ultimately released. Justice McDonald determined that the release of some applicants was not sufficient evidence that a fair review process existed, nor that the STCA had minimally impaired the applicants’ section 7 rights. Having found that the STCA infringed section 7, Justice McDonald declined to comment on section 15(1).

What comes next…?

At the time of writing, the STCA is still in effect. The Canadian government has announced that it plans to appeal the Federal Court decision. The decision and the upcoming appeal hold meaningful implications for several groups of actors in Canada and around the globe.

…For policymakers in Canada and abroad?

It is worth considering how the outcome of the appeal may inform future safe third country agreements. While the U.S. is the only country designated as a safe country under the IRPA Regulations, several other countries have pursued similar arrangements aimed at sharing responsibility for asylum seekers.

If the federal government’s appeal is dismissed and the Federal Court decision stands, this case shows that if Canada or a state with similar rights regimes decides to return asylum seekers to a state subject to a safe third country agreement, Canada (or the similar state) will violate the asylum seekers’ rights where the other country’s authorities infringe claimants’ rights to liberty or security of the person. However, this is provided that there is a causal connection between these infringements and the safe third country agreement. Overall, the Federal Court decision underscores the importance of detailed human rights evaluations and functional detention review mechanisms for any future safe third country agreements.

Building from this decision, advocates outside of Canada may look to their own regimes.

As Professor Tally Kritzman-Amir wrote in a 2020 piece for Boston University International Law Journal on the Federal Court case, “[A] growing body of judicial opinions suggests that Safe Third Country Agreements cannot be used with disregard to their consequences on the rights of asylum seekers and cannot be a mere mechanism of externalization.”

…For asylum seekers and refugee lawyers in Canada?

Although Justice McDonald declined to address these arguments and they will not be handled on appeal, the appeal may re-open public conversation around the STCA from a gendered perspective. In fact, several developments indicate that gender-based discriminations is becoming an increasingly salient issue in Canadian refugee law more broadly. The Canadian Council for Refugees, which was a party in the Federal Court case, has identified a number of gender-related issues pertaining to Canada’s immigration and refugee systems. These issues include women migrant workers’ vulnerability to human trafficking, as well as the arrest and deportation of women reported by abusive partners. For these reasons, the applicants’ gendered perspective on asylum seekers’ experiences may prove a key point of contention in future legal challenges involving Canada’s immigration and refugee systems.

Closing Thoughts

The Federal Court decision on the STCA is significant both in terms of Canadian constitutional law and human rights advocacy at the global level. In the words of Justice McDonald, “Canada ‘does not avoid the guarantee of fundamental justice merely because the deprivation in question would be affected by someone else’s hand’…[t]he fact that STCA returnees are imprisoned by U.S. authorities, does not immunize the actions of Canadian officials from consideration.” In the interconnected landscape of refugee law and international treaties, Canada cannot afford to overlook how the country’s refugee system interacts with those of other states.

By Ainslie Pierrynowski (2L)
In retrospect, there were early signs that the 2020-2021 course selection would fulfill all the promise it demonstrated last year. The moment course lists were posted on June 29, something was awry: too many hours, too few hours, and no exam schedules whatsoever. Immediate contact by the Students' Law Society (SLS) about the discrepancies brought no initial response from the administration, which was followed by a University holiday the next day. With questions left unanswered and the July 6 start of course selection looming, this did not inspire confidence.

Cognomos, the course selection system implemented by the Faculty last year and infamously “powered by Nobel Prize-winning Economics,” was fraught with challenges in its first run. Students must select twice as many courses as it is possible to take, and then rank them according to four preference categories. After the system is fed each student’s rankings, it spits out a schedule for each student on the basis of “maximizing happiness,” as it is described. Fundamentally, it is a lottery system providing the appearance of choice on the front end, but there is no guarantee that minimum credit hours will be assigned or that rankings will be meaningfully incorporated. After a rocky first year, many hoped that these fundamental issues would be addressed.

The day before the July 15 deadline for course selections, a number of courses were added. These included glaring absences in previously-released offerings, such as Criminal Procedure. While these last-minute additions suggested capacity problems, the extent of this issue was not obvious until two weeks later on July 30, when course allocations had been run. A startling number of students (informal surveys suggesting at least 60-70%) reported being placed in fewer than the minimum number of credit hours, some in as few as two courses for the entire year. In its algorithmic wisdom, Cognomos placed students in two sections of the same course, assigned overlapping courses, clogged inboxes with notifications about courses it failed to add, shunted students to the bottom of highly-ranked courses, and flagged waitlist requests without apparent cause.

Furthermore, there simply did not seem to be enough seats for students, particularly for those attending in-person. In response to the chaos, Assistant Dean Sara Faherty assured students that “this happens to dozens of students every term, and it is usually covered by the end of the add/drop period,” and that “the waitlists move a lot over the summer.” Staff worked around the clock to address issues, many of which had to be manually corrected. On the other hand, students reported that their panicked calls and emails to the administration were either ignored or substantially unhelpful. They were advised to register in courses with remaining seats, add themselves to more waitlists, or apply for exceptional credit-earning opportunities like Directed Research Projects (DRP), Supervised Upper Year Research Projects (SURVP) or journals.

None of these suggestions struck at the core issue of a systemic credit shortage. Remaining seats were largely in required courses many 3Ls had already taken, or in courses subject to conflicts with students’ already-thinned schedules. 3Ls also lacked International, Comparative, and Transnational graduation requirements, despite prior assurances that they would be placed in required courses they did not receive through the allocation. As waitlists remained largely stagnant, it seemed fruitless to continue joining increasing numbers of waitlists. Meanwhile, in-person students falling short of credit minimums were inexplicably barred from available seats in remote sections.

These issues continued throughout August, with two postponements of the deadline for add/drop requests due to Cognomos improperly flagging waitlist requests. As of August 24, students were simultaneously advised to add themselves to a minimum of six waitlists and remove themselves from waitlists of courses in which they had already been assigned. Students acknowledged the diminishing returns after waitlist numbers stretched beyond course capacity. In addition to continuing to push “flexible credit-earning opportunities” (in other words, not classes), Assistant Dean Faherty informed students that “at least one more course” would be added, and some existing courses would add additional spots, a mere two weeks before the start of the term. Students were advised to be patient.

While the SLS formally raised concerns and recommendations to the administration on September 1, the process ground on through the start of the term, through most tryouts and the eventual posting of January intensives. Despite assurances, as of September 18, these remained students lacking sufficient credit hours.

In retrospect, there were early signs that the 2020-2021 course selection would fulfill all the promise it demonstrated last year. The moment course lists were posted on June 29, something was awry: too many hours, too few hours, and no exam schedules whatsoever. Immediate contact by the Students’ Law Society (SLS) about the discrepancies brought no initial response from the administration, which was followed by a University holiday the next day. With questions left unanswered and the July 6 start of course selection looming, this did not inspire confidence.

Cognomos, the course selection system implemented by the Faculty last year and infamously “powered by Nobel Prize-winning Economics,” was fraught with challenges in its first run. Students must select twice as many courses as it is possible to take, and then rank them according to four preference categories. After the system is fed each student’s rankings, it spits out a schedule for each student on the basis of “maximizing happiness,” as it is described. Fundamentally, it is a lottery system providing the appearance of choice on the front end, but there is no guarantee that minimum credit hours will be assigned or that rankings will be meaningfully incorporated. After a rocky first year, many hoped that these fundamental issues would be addressed.

The day before the July 15 deadline for course selections, a number of courses were added. These included glaring absences in previously-released offerings, such as Criminal Procedure. While these last-minute additions suggested capacity problems, the extent of this issue was not obvious until two weeks later on July 30, when course allocations had been run. A startling number of students (informal surveys suggesting at least 60-70%) reported being placed in fewer than the minimum number of credit hours, some in as few as two courses for the entire year. In its algorithmic wisdom, Cognomos placed students in two sections of the same course, assigned overlapping courses, clogged inboxes with notifications about courses it failed to add, shunted students to the bottom of highly-ranked courses, and flagged waitlist requests without apparent cause.

Furthermore, there simply did not seem to be enough seats for students, particularly for those attending in-person. In response to the chaos, Assistant Dean Sara Faherty assured students that “this happens to dozens of students every term, and it is usually covered by the end of the add/drop period,” and that “the waitlists move a lot over the summer.” Staff worked around the clock to address issues, many of which had to be manually corrected. On the other hand, students reported that their panicked calls and emails to the administration were either ignored or substantially unhelpful. They were advised to register in courses with remaining seats, add themselves to more waitlists, or apply for exceptional credit-earning opportunities like Directed Research Projects (DRP), Supervised Upper Year Research Projects (SURVP) or journals.

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Sad Attempt at a Semester
The Faculty’s attempt at delivering in-person courses gets an LP

WILLIAM MAZUREK (3L)

U of T Law departed from many of its peers in June when it announced its intention to proceed with a hybrid remote/in-person academic year.

While the majority of Canadian law schools had already announced their intention to proceed completely remotely, the Faculty of Law opted to allow students to attend classes in-person with a remote option for students with “health concerns.”

Though the Faculty’s plans seemed promising when they were unveiled, their execution has been a sore disappointment. The Faculty’s efforts to provide in-person course delivery have failed to live up to their promises. In pandemic mitigation rules are intrusive and — in many cases — irrational.

In-Person Classes Aren’t Really In-Person

The Faculty deserves a failing grade for its efforts to provide in-person classes. Prior to the semester, the Faculty failed to inform students about the number of confirmed cases within the Faculty. It also failed to inform students of positive COVID-19 cases. This decision has grave implications concerning informed decision-making, transparency and public safety.

Remote students had known this prior to the start of the semester, it is doubtful that any would have elected to go entirely remote, even if they had no intention of remaining in Toronto. After all, opting to be remote simply means losing building privileges and losing the option of attending any lectures in-person with no corresponding benefit.

Some Mitigation Measures are Intensive and Non-sensical

In an effort to limit viral transmission between students in the building, the school has introduced a number of highly visible mitigation measures. Some of these measures are reasonable, but many are intrusive, non-sensical, and even counterproductive.

Of the ubiquitous measures available to critique, one of the most egregious is the University of Toronto Libraries’ decision to close their stacks. “Once touched, a book needs to be sanitized for four days,” the Bora Laskin Law Library proclaimed in a September 2 email. One need not be an immunologist to see that this policy is nonsensical. The grocery store doesn’t quarantine its apples after food handlers briefy look at them.

Even more obvious, the Library itself has left its book of campaign donors on its customary pedestal for any passerby to touch. I’m no doctor, but I’m fairly certain that COVID doesn’t discriminate between books of donors and books in the stacks.

Another point for which the school deserves criticism is in its treatment of remote students. Remote students pay the same fees as in-person students, yet are stigmatized by the lack of in-person lectures. The Faculty of Law is the only academic institution that the Faculty refuses to list in-person classes on their website.

In-Person

For example, take the upper-year course Secure Transactions. The Faculty advertised it as an in-person course, yet the vast majority of classes are delivered online.

The course description on the Faculty of Law website states, “this class will meet two times a week in-person.” The timetable displays the same information: the course meets twice per week in room J250. The syllabus, however, discloses that during the entire course, there will only be eight in-person lectures.

In-Person

Canadian Income Tax Law is another example. Despite its representation on the Faculty’s site that the course would not be entirely remote, less than a third of its course hours are in-person. The syllabus of this course states: “This course will meet twice a week. One meeting will be in-person. The other will be hybrid, rotating between AV conferences and in-class meetings.”

Wearing a mask while working at a distance is disorienting for its mandates. It also stigmatizes those who don’t wear masks, such as students with health concerns.

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No Excuses for Defying Common Sense

The Faculty’s attempt to implement one-way traffic in and out of lecture halls has caused the very congestion that the policy seeks to prevent. One-way traffic does not work to reduce congestion in a lecture hall where students enter and exit at the beginning of a lecture, and exit together at the end. One-way traffic simply forces all entering and exiting students to use the same door while leaving another door completely unused. This causes more congestion and crowding than would occur if students were allowed to use both doors for both entry and exit.

WILLIAM MAZUREK (3L)

HUSSEIN E. E. FAWZY (LL)

On September 8, Associate Dean Christopher Essert emailed the U of T Faculty of Law community to say that a 1L student tested positive for COVID-19.

At the time of the notice, the student was asymptomatic and in self-isolation. Following standard procedures, the University’s Occupational Health and Safety team completed contact tracing and the Faculty performed a deep-clean of the affected areas.

Notably, Associate Dean Essert stated that “in accordance with established procedures,” emails notifying the law school community about positive COVID-19 cases will not be routinely sent by the Faculty. Instead, the University’s Occupational Health Nurse will only contact individuals who may have been in contact with the positive case. This decision has grave implications concerning informed decision-making, transparency, and public safety.

The Faculty recognizes the unusual circumstances of the 2020-2021 academic year and has made efforts to respect students’ wishes regarding the transition to attend classes in-person. This approach empowers students by giving them the autonomy to choose what mode of instruction is in their best interest given their unique individual circumstances. However, by withholding information critical to students’ decision-making, the Faculty has seriously undermined the agency and autonomy of students.

In order to determine whether to attend in-person or online, students must have an understanding of the level of COVID-19 risk exposure. This risk tolerance varies between students and can depend upon factors such as being high-risk or living with high-risk individuals. In deciding whether the risk has exceeded one’s tolerance, it is imperative for students to be informed of the number of confirmed cases within the Faculty. It is undeniable that an awareness of the number of confirmed cases in one’s vicinity is a substantial factor in understanding one’s risk.

When it is fortuitous that our first positive case was asymptomatic and identified quickly, an alternative scenario where multiple students are infected is certainly foreseeable. Displaying a tally of the number of individuals who tested positive in the Faculty is arguably the most informative statistic in risk calculation. This calculation would be integral to all students and staff making their daily informed decision on how to attend school.

Abstaining from reporting positive cases lacks a convincing reason. Concerns of confidentiality are virtually non-existent since a mere tally lacks any identifiable information that can be linked to afflicted students or staff. While sharing these statistics may arouse fear or panic, as typical with public safety announcements, the need for transparency and informed participation of members affected by this issue is critical. Perhaps a reaction of fear to increasing cases in the Faculty is called for and is the appropriate reaction to this situation. Our preference is that information collected from afflicted students and staff will be limited to some degree. Individuals who experience symptoms or test positive for COVID-19 may decide to self-isolate without revealing their private medical status to the University’s Occupational Health and Safety team, despite their obligation to do so. In this scenario, the data collected by the University, and by extension, the Faculty, will reflect an underestimation.

However, similar to other public agencies that face issues of under-reporting, having as much reliable information as possible is an unquestionably better alternative than having none. After all, individuals in the Faculty of Law community are competent enough to account for such limitations when making their decisions.
The Semester Must Go On
In response to criticisms against the University and Faculty’s COVID-19 recovery efforts

SABRINA MACKLAI (1L JD/MI)

Amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many Canadian universities and their law schools opted to shift operations completely online. In a somewhat controversial move, U of T Law elected to offer a blend of in-person and remote classes.

There is little doubt that the university, and the law school, have had far from a perfect response to the pandemic. For example, criticisms regarding continued high tuition fees and the lack of recorded lectures are valid and should be considered by the administration. However, some criticisms against the school seem unnecessary and, frankly, reek of entitlement.

Over the summer, students had to decide their preferred mode of delivery for the upcoming academic year (either in-person or remote). They were cautioned that their decision would be final.

It is fair for students who selected in-person studies to be frustrated when the majority of their class time is spent remotely. This is especially true given that many students may have made the decision to move and suffer the high costs of Toronto rent.

It is unfair, however, to fault the Faculty for decisions made in light of rapidly evolving public health recommendations. This is especially true given that many students have made the decision to move and suffer the high costs of Toronto rent.

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The alternative to being open to an evolving situation would be to have all classes operate remotely. In this case, students would not have the opportunity to attend a certain number of in-person classes. I may be bold to assume, however, that this alternative would not appease the critics.

While the criticism that remote students are treated unfairly does have some merit, it is unreasonable to expect the Faculty to circumvent the university’s health precautions by allowing remote students access to the building. Students were warned that their decision to study remotely would be final. It is unfortunate these students are not given access to the same law school facilities as in-person students, but this is not an argument that in-person students should not be given Zoom links.

If an in-person student falls ill or has a situation that changes their risk of exposure, they should be given an option to attend remotely, as the Faculty has done. To do otherwise would be to unnecessarily put in-person students at higher risk of COVID-19 exposure.

Perhaps the most nonsensical criticisms I’ve seen are those directed at the Bora Laskin Law Library. The decision to close the physical library stacks was made by the University of Toronto Libraries (UTL) system to accommodate changes in library operations intended to protect both students and library staff. To allow the University to have access to the Hathitrust ETAS, a collection of digitized versions of the library’s books. To abide by copyright laws, stacks must remain closed. By negotiating an agreement with the Hathitrust, UTL ensures that collections remain accessible to students who cannot visit the library in-person.

This does not mean that students lack access to any physical library resources. In fact, if one asked a librarian or simply referred to the website, one would notice that many libraries, including the law library, offer curbside pickup. Essentially, students and faculty may request books from the physical stacks that are not present in the Hathitrust ETAS collection to be picked up at Robarts Library.

Criticisms against the library’s protocols for sanitation appear even more outlandish. UTL has implemented several safety measures to ensure library materials and services are safe for use. While one may find it ridiculous to quarantine a book, I would trust the information professionals to understand the sanitation protocols required to make their materials safe for use. Furthermore, while students may use library facilities without cleaning between uses, they are offered and encouraged to use hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes.

I will not debate the merits of mask-wearing in public spaces, even if one is in a room entirely alone. This is not a decision made by the Faculty nor UTL, but rather in accordance with the University’s policies. If one wants to attend in-person, which should honestly be viewed as a privilege and not a right, then one should adhere to the rules made in the interest of public health and safety.

GrasshoppHer: Mentorship, networking, and recruitment will look different post-2020. Enter GrasshoppHer.

DANYA FIRESTONE (3L JD/MBA) AND SARAH FIRESTONE (JD 2019)

GrasshoppHer: A Mobile Application

GrasshoppHer is a mobile app that connects female and non-binary mentees and mentors.

While women make up 47% of the workforce, they only account for 21.2% of leadership roles. Worse, statistics show that there is a disproportionately low number of women mentors and role models in the workforce.

On the app, users can create profiles and connect with mentors and mentees beyond their established communities and networks. Access to this network of mentors and sponsors can provide access to role models, conversations, and opportunities for mentees to get their foot in the door. One can check out GrasshoppHer’s website for more information.

Heather Miller: The Founder’s Story

The founder, Heather Miller, is a lawyer with deep ties to the Toronto and legal communities. Born and raised in Toronto, Heather is a graduate of Osgoode Hall Law School.

As a childhood ballerina, Heather twirled her way to The National Ballet School of Canada. While she lived out her tutu-filled fantasies, she witnessed the troubles, such as eating disorders and bullying, that her young female peers, who lacked leadership and guidance, experienced. She made a vow that one day she would put herself in the position to make a difference. She went to law school pursuing the potential to create real, positive change.

She worked to help low-income individuals and those in the mental health system find necessary support and resources, where the state, government, and their networks were failing them.

Later in her professional life, she continued to see gaps and set out on her next mission to pursue equality in the workplace. This was the impetus for her “aha moment.” Through these very different life experiences, she identified a common problem: a lack of access to support, guidance, and mentorship. She created GrasshoppHer to build a community where women can come together to inspire each other and provide a leg up.

Female Mentorship in the Canadian Legal Community

While the app was developed to cater to the broader community, the legal community faces the same systemic problems that GrasshoppHer seeks to solve. Mentorship is already a crucial part of the fabric of the legal community, but more can be done to connect women mentees with mentors and role models in the industry.

Furthermore, given the current global pandemic and its impact on legal recruiting, it is more important than ever that mentorship conversations and networking opportunities take place virtually and on a digital platform. GrasshoppHer is working to ensure that women in the Canadian Legal Community have access to each other and the benefits that knowledge-sharing provides. This will be incredibly important this year given that OCIs will be held virtually. If you are interested in joining the community, sign up for the app.

Please feel free to reach out to Heather with questions or to learn how GrasshoppHer can work with your organization: contact Heather Miller at hello@grasshoppher.com
HARRY MYLES (1L)

On November 1, 2019, I, along with thousands of others, submitted my application to U of T Law. COVID-19 was a future news story another continent away. It was a simpler time when the word “pandemic” was associated more with the Spanish Flu than the 21st century. But the past is history and COVID-19 is here to stay. After a summer of bread baking and TV bingeing, I approached the start of Legal Methods on August 24 with a blend of excitement and paralyzing anxiety. Now that day has come to pass and September is nearing its end, I have had some time to reflect on 1L so far. You can’t talk about the 1L Pandemic Experience without mentioning the elephant in the room. Or rather, the mask on the face. By now, I’m more acquainted with the intricacies of someone’s rotation of masks than I am with the actual lower half of their head. Does he have a beard? Who knows? But man, that pained face sure is a crowd-pleaser. I can even say that I’ve almost gotten used to breathing in my own recycled air for five hours a day. On the bright side, though, I’ve never appreciated the smell of Toronto more than when I step outside and inhale a big lungful of that smoggy air.

One of the selling points of U of T Law is the networking. You’ll meet future CEOs and Presidents! While I’m sure my peers will all go on to lead many successful careers, networking in the midst of a pandemic is a little tough. I think most 1Ls have accepted the fact that we’ll meet, at most, 20 percent of our class this year. Then, hopefully once the Zoomers and in-person attendees are reunited, we’ll become one big happy 2L family. We’ve tried to make it work, though. “Park hang” has become the go-to social event. Small groups take over half of Queen’s Park every Friday or Saturday for physically distanced social gatherings. During these outings, we get the rare treat of seeing the face behind the mask. This is perhaps the most intimate experience two people can have in this pandemic world.

“Are you online or in-person?” Although we are all in this together, we are also a divided 1L-separated by that digital realm. The majority of my classes are in-person, so I do not have first-hand experience of what it’s like to attend law school through Zoom. But I don’t think I’m speaking out of turn by saying it’s not the most desirable experience. Is your camera on? Better make sure that pile of dirty laundry is off your bed because even though your professor says he won’t judge, he definitely will. Are you on mute? I think everyone can recall that moment of sheer panic when you start roasting your prof to your roommate and can’t remember if you’re on mute. Perhaps the one benefit of Zoom School is that when you oversleep, you don’t have to rush out the door but instead just roll over and open your laptop.

In all seriousness, this 1L experience has been truly unique. The Class of 2023 has something quite exceptional to share. We are united, whether through Zoom or in-person, as the Class of COVID-19 and nothing, not even a virus or terrible Internet connection, can take that away from us.
The 2020-21 Law School Changes: Rated

The Faculty always gets to grade us, now it’s our turn

ADRIENNE RALPH (2L)

**Mandated Classroom Entrances/Exits**

8/10

All classrooms in the law school, including the law school itself (more on that later), now have designated entrances and exits, and all are encouraged to move to the last empty seat in a row before sitting down. This change is great, in theory. Squishing past people to get to the only seat available that’s close enough for my ever-increasing glasses prescription to handle was the bane of my existence last year. However, in practice, the changes are somewhat less impressive. While the entrances and exits do help the flow of people in and out of class, the whole moving-to-the-last-seat concept seems to have not caught on yet. I’ve still had to do the awkward suck-in-and-squish-past movement on far too many occasions.

**Lack of Free Food**

- 2020/10

One of the highlights of my law school experience last year was the amount of free food available – from UV pitch meeting pizza, to Lawyers Doing Cool Things fancy sandwiches, it almost made the tuition price worth it. While there may be the occasional boxed lunch available this year, it won’t be the same as my tradition of attempting to get a free lunch every day of the week.

**Building Entry Fobs**

7/10

There are many positives to the new building fobs, provided to in-person students so we can access the law school: no pesky undergrads watching their Khan Academy calculus videos in Jackman, a fun, new keychain accessory, the feeling of exclusivity when you get to tap in. However, they come with a couple of downsides. Entering through only one door is quite inconvenient. While the safety precautions are appreciated, it would be nice if I did not have to walk half the circumference of the law building to get to the only available entrance. Fobs are also not available to 2Ls in joint programs this year. While again, this makes sense on paper, it poses issues for students wanting to attend law-school-hosted events and access law school resources, if needed.

**Essert As Associate Dean**

11/10

UV alumni on the admin team? Enough said; instant perfect score. One who wrote pizza reviews during his time here? Even better.

**IHRP Scandal**

1/10

The Faculty of Law is no stranger to a juicy Globe and Mail exposé, so I’m not sure how much of a change this really is. This gets one single point for giving us something to gossip about during the monotonous days of COVID. It gets absolutely none for… just about everything else.

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9 out of 10 Bay Street Firms agree having Ultra Vires on your resume is a good thing. Submit pieces to editor@ultravires.ca

(Emphasis and emphasized word added)
Face Masks: Navigating a New Fashion Trend?
What your mask says about you

JENNIFER SUN (1L)

Whether you like it or not, 2020 is the era of the face mask. At the Faculty of Law, instead of seeing everyone's face full of joy and happiness (or misery if you didn't finish your readings and cold calls await you), we see nothing but a sea of masks. Yet, we are resilient and always find ways to express ourselves. So, what does your mask choice say about you?

Simple is best: Black

There is no debate that black masks are one of the simplest yet coolest designs out there. This mask goes well with any outfit: black suits or hoodies alike. Many heads of state regularly wear them; need we say more?

White

While not as common as black masks, white masks communicate a similar message and complement any fashion choice with a vibe of elegance that resides in simplicity.

Colours

Another variation of this theme consists of masks of a single colour. These masks are slightly more distinguished from black or white masks as the wearer must put more thought into how the specific colour works with what they are wearing that day. A rather subjective recommendation is to avoid these colourful masks if you don’t have a matching outfit.

Subtly unique

There is a niche of students who, while appreciating the beauty of simplicity, are not entirely satisfied with the way average simple masks look. These students opt for masks with small accent designs at the corner or along the edge to convey a subtle individuality that people will notice only when they are close enough (but still two metres apart).

Intricately unique

Now, this is the category where individuality is front and centre. With abstract or floral patterns, these fashionable masks are a great way to differentiate yourself from others. The chance of someone else wearing the same mask on the same day is close to zero. If that ever happens, a long-lasting friendship may ensue.

Proud to be a student

There could be several reasons why you wear the standard U of T mask. Maybe you just love this specific hue of blue, or maybe you are proud to be here. Or, perhaps because they were free 😊. And who doesn’t love free stuff when the tuition is so high?

“I was here in August”

There will never be enough free masks. For 1L students (myself included) who had to endure two weeks of Legal Methods before the official start of the academic year, we definitely deserved another free mask, courtesy of the SLS.

Health is the priority

Lastly, let’s not forget why we are wearing masks: for health and safety. In achieving this particular purpose, certified surgical masks may have the edge over cloth masks and some students may choose to wear them instead. These surgical masks are also readily available and come in a pack of 30 or 50 that will last for quite some time.

As the school year goes on, we will likely see the emergence of more distinct face masks. Just like any other fashion trend, we may witness the rise of an entirely different design followed by the return to the traditional. Perhaps we will each be designing our own mask by the end of all this. Only time will tell. But one thing we know for sure in the meantime: please wear your masks inside the law school buildings.