Recommendations for Summer Reading before the First Year of Law School

Dean’s picks are marked with an asterisk (*)

I. Books about the American Legal System

- Law 101: Everything You Need to Know About the American Legal System by Jay Feinman (Law Library does not carry this title)
  o An introductory text for those seeking a general understanding of the American legal system. The author breaks the book into chapters which correspond roughly to the subjects students will study in the first year of law school. Although not comprehensive or particularly detailed, this serves as a great starter text for aspiring lawyers.

- An Introduction to the Legal System of the United States by E. Allan Farnsworth (Law Library has multiple copies)
  o An esteemed title by a well-respected author, this text gives an introductory account of many aspects of the legal system and the study of law. Written primarily for outsiders to the law, this book should provide a good start for beginning law students.

- American Law: An Introduction by Lawrence M. Friedman (Law Library does not carry this title)
  o A general survey of the structure and subjects of American law in plain language. Not as in-depth (or as affordable) as Law 101.

- American Courts by Daniel John Meador (Law Library has 1 copy)
  o A concise description of the intricacies of the American judicial system. This book describes how the state and federal systems coexist, and points out many of the problems and complications that arise from this system. A good description of this system in relatively simple terms.

- The Moral Compass of the American Lawyer by Richard A. Zitrin and Carol A. Langford (Law Library has 1 copy)*
  o An analysis of the moral landscape of the practice of law in America. While defending the American system of justice, the authors point out many of the ethical quandaries that can lead many lawyers down the wrong path. A good text to get new law students to think about the moral implications of this career path.
II. Books About Law School Survival and Strategies:

- **Law School Confidential** by Robert H. Miller (Law Library has 1 copy of 2000 edition, the book has been revised since then)
  
  A book intended to orient future law students to what they can expect from the law school experience. The book covers a wide range of subjects, describing all aspects of law school from choosing a school to applying for jobs. Opinions vary as to the quality of the advice offered by the author, but it provides good suggestions for case briefing and other aspects of studying law.

- **Getting to Maybe** by Richard Fischl and Jeremy Paul (Law Library has multiple copies)
  
  This book is focused on how to take law school exams, but rather than offering rigid strategies for success, the authors discuss how to spot and analyze important dilemmas and apply legal reasoning. A very highly recommended title for incoming and first-year law students.

- **Law School Without Fear: Strategies for Success** by Helene S. Shapo and Marshall S. Shapo (Law Library has multiple copies)
  
  Written by two married law school professors to help their son through law school, this book gives incoming students a general introduction to many of the concepts they will encounter in law school. Often recommended by law schools and professors for incoming 1Ls.

- **Bridging the Gap Between College and Law School** by Ruta Stropus and Charlotte D. Taylor (Law Library has 1 copy listed, but it has apparently been lost)
  
  Provides incoming law students with strategies for approaching law school, focusing on step-by-step processes and how to address common problems encountered in the first year. Also provides exercises to solidify learned skills.

- **1L of a Ride** by Andrew J. McClurg*
  
  Written by a law professor with more than two decades of experience teaching thousands of law students at six law schools.

III. “Fun” Legal Books (Legal Fiction and Non-Fiction)

- Non-Fiction
  
  - *The Buffalo Creek Disaster* by Gerald Stern (Law Library has 1 copy)
    
    A detailed account of the litigation process following the Buffalo Creek dam disaster in 1972. A truly engrossing read.
  
  - *Gideon’s Trumpet* by Anthony Lewis (Law Library has multiple copies)
    
    The story behind the right to court-appointed counsel for criminal defendants. The authors go into great detail in describing the major players in the story, drawing the reader in.
  
  - *The Brethren: Inside the Supreme Court* by Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong (Law Library has 1 copy)
A behind-the-scenes look at the U.S. Supreme Court in the early 1970s. Provides a fascinating look at major court decisions and the relationships between the justices.

- *One L* by Scott Turow (Law Library does not carry this title)
  - Scott Turow’s account of his first year at Harvard Law School in the mid-1970s. An entertaining story, although not at all reflective of the current environment in American law schools.

- *A Civil Action* by Jonathan Harr*
  - Both the book and the film are based on a true story of environmental pollution that took place in Woburn, Massachusetts in the 1980s.

- **Fiction**
  - *Inherit the Wind* by Jerome Lawrence (Law Library does not carry this title)
    - A stage dramatization of the Scopes Monkey Trial, dealing with the controversy over teaching evolution in schools in 1925.
  
  - *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (Law Library has 1 copy)*
    - The compelling, classic tale about standing up to injustice and intolerance. Inspired an excellent film adaptation.
  
  - *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens (Law Library does not carry this title)
    - Focused on a single case involving an inheritance, Dickens paints interesting characters and plots while also delving into details of British law and procedure.
  
  - *A Time to Kill* by John Grisham*
    - Influenced by *To Kill a Mockinbird*, Grisham’s story revolves around a trial of a father who kills the men who raped and beat his 10-year old daughter.