

above the law biglaw

above the law biglaw is a phrase that resonates throughout the legal industry, capturing the attention of lawyers, law students, and anyone interested in the inner workings of large law firms. This article delves into the world of Biglaw, exploring what sets these prestigious firms apart, their workplace culture, salary structures, and the role Above the Law—a leading legal news website—plays in shaping industry conversations. Readers will gain insights into how Biglaw firms operate, the expectations placed on associates and partners, trends affecting the profession, and how Above the Law influences perceptions and discussions about high-profile legal careers. Whether you're aspiring to join Biglaw, curious about its challenges, or seeking to understand its impact on the legal world, this comprehensive guide provides a factual, keyword-rich overview that illuminates every facet of the topic.

- Understanding Biglaw: Definition and Significance
- Above the Law's Role in Biglaw Coverage
- Biglaw Firm Structure and Culture
- Compensation and Salary Trends in Biglaw
- Recruitment, Associate Life, and Career Progression
- Challenges and Controversies in Biglaw
- Recent Trends Shaping Biglaw Practices

Understanding Biglaw: Definition and Significance

Biglaw refers to the largest and most influential law firms, often based in major metropolitan areas and serving high-profile clients across the globe. These firms are characterized by their extensive resources, high billable hour requirements, and the ability to handle complex legal matters in areas such as mergers and acquisitions, litigation, and finance. The term "Biglaw" is frequently used on Above the Law to describe firms ranked in the Am Law 100 and Vault 100 lists, which represent the pinnacle of success in private legal practice.

The significance of Biglaw lies in its impact on legal precedent, business transactions, and even societal norms. Lawyers in Biglaw firms are often at the forefront of major corporate deals, landmark court cases, and regulatory changes. This prominence attracts ambitious law graduates and seasoned attorneys who seek both professional growth and lucrative compensation packages.

Above the Law's Role in Biglaw Coverage

Legal Industry News and Analysis

Above the Law is a leading digital publication focused on legal news, commentary, and industry analysis. The website plays a pivotal role in covering Biglaw firms, offering real-time updates on associate bonuses, lateral moves, firm mergers, and workplace controversies. Its reporting is widely read by legal professionals, law students, and recruiters seeking up-to-date information about the legal job market and firm reputations.

Influence on Biglaw Culture

Through investigative journalism and insider tips, Above the Law shapes perceptions of Biglaw culture. The site frequently publishes stories on working conditions, diversity initiatives, and high-profile departures, sparking conversations that can lead to tangible changes within firms. With its candid approach, Above the Law has become a watchdog for industry trends, influencing how law firms respond to employee concerns and market pressures.

Biglaw Firm Structure and Culture

Organizational Hierarchy

Biglaw firms are structured with distinct hierarchical levels, including associates, counsel, partners, and administrative staff. Associates are typically recent law school graduates who work under the supervision of partners, progressing through a series of promotions based on experience and performance. Partners, who hold ownership stakes in the firm, guide business development and client relationships.

Workplace Environment

The culture in Biglaw firms is driven by high expectations, competitive performance metrics, and a strong focus on client service. Associates often face demanding workloads and tight deadlines, contributing to a fast-paced environment that rewards productivity and attention to detail. Firms invest in training and professional development, but the pressure to meet billable hour targets can be intense.

- Teamwork and collaboration on large cases
- Emphasis on client satisfaction and responsiveness

- Frequent networking and business development events
- Robust mentorship programs for junior lawyers

Compensation and Salary Trends in Biglaw

Associate Salaries and Bonuses

Biglaw is renowned for its lucrative compensation packages, especially for associates in major markets. First-year associate salaries at top Biglaw firms often exceed six figures, with recent market rates hovering around \$215,000 to \$225,000 per year. Above the Law regularly reports on salary increases, bonus announcements, and compensation wars as firms compete to attract and retain legal talent.

Partner Compensation Models

Partners in Biglaw enjoy substantial earnings, with equity partners receiving shares of firm profits and non-equity partners earning fixed salaries. Compensation is often tied to client origination, billable hours, and firm profitability. The pay gap between junior associates and senior partners can be significant, reflecting differing levels of responsibility and business development success.

Recruitment, Associate Life, and Career Progression

Hiring Practices and Law School Recruitment

Biglaw firms recruit top talent from leading law schools, conducting on-campus interviews and summer associate programs that serve as pipelines for full-time positions. Candidates are evaluated on academic performance, interpersonal skills, and potential for growth within the firm. Above the Law provides coverage of recruitment trends, highlighting shifts in hiring practices and law school rankings.

Associate Experience and Advancement

The typical Biglaw associate experience involves long hours, rigorous training, and exposure to complex legal matters. Advancement is measured by meeting billable hour requirements, demonstrating leadership abilities, and building client relationships. Associates who excel may be promoted to counsel or partner, while others transition to in-house roles or alternative legal careers.

1. Summer associate programs as gateways to full-time offers
2. Annual performance reviews and mentorship
3. Opportunities for lateral moves between firms
4. Transition paths to partnership or in-house counsel roles

Challenges and Controversies in Biglaw

Work-Life Balance and Burnout

One of the most persistent challenges in Biglaw is maintaining work-life balance. Associates routinely report high levels of stress and burnout due to demanding schedules, client expectations, and the pressure to exceed billable hour targets. Above the Law frequently features stories and surveys on mental health, wellness initiatives, and the effectiveness of firm policies designed to address these issues.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Biglaw firms have faced scrutiny over diversity and inclusion efforts. While many firms have launched initiatives to increase representation of women, minorities, and LGBTQ+ attorneys, progress has been slow in some areas. Above the Law tracks developments in diversity programs, reporting on new hires, leadership appointments, and cultural shifts within the industry.

Recent Trends Shaping Biglaw Practices

Technology and Legal Innovation

Biglaw firms are investing in legal technology to streamline workflows, improve client service, and enhance efficiency. Tools such as artificial intelligence, e-discovery software, and case management platforms are transforming how lawyers conduct research, draft documents, and manage large-scale litigation. Above the Law covers innovations that are redefining the delivery of legal services in Biglaw.

Remote Work and Flexible Arrangements

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work and flexible schedules in Biglaw. Firms

are now reevaluating office space needs, implementing hybrid work policies, and leveraging technology for virtual collaboration. Above the Law provides ongoing analysis of how these changes are affecting productivity, firm culture, and employee retention.

Globalization and Expansion

Biglaw firms continue to expand internationally, opening offices in key financial centers and forming cross-border alliances. This trend enables firms to serve multinational clients, navigate complex regulatory environments, and compete on a global scale. Above the Law tracks major expansions, mergers, and strategic partnerships that shape the global Biglaw landscape.

Trending and Relevant Questions & Answers about above the law biglaw

Q: What does the term "Biglaw" mean in the legal industry?

A: Biglaw refers to large, prestigious law firms known for handling complex, high-value cases and serving major corporate clients. These firms typically have hundreds of lawyers and offer top-tier compensation.

Q: How does Above the Law impact Biglaw firms?

A: Above the Law provides news, analysis, and insider perspectives on Biglaw firms, influencing public opinion and internal discussions about workplace culture, compensation, and industry trends.

Q: What are the typical starting salaries for Biglaw associates?

A: Starting salaries for first-year associates at leading Biglaw firms generally range from \$215,000 to \$225,000, with additional bonuses based on performance and firm profitability.

Q: What are common challenges faced by Biglaw lawyers?

A: Biglaw lawyers often struggle with work-life balance, high stress, intense billable hour requirements, and the pressure to excel in a competitive environment.

Q: How do Biglaw firms recruit new associates?

A: Biglaw firms recruit through on-campus interviews at top law schools, summer associate programs, and lateral hiring from other firms based on experience and credentials.

Q: What role does diversity play in Biglaw today?

A: Diversity, equity, and inclusion are increasingly important in Biglaw, with firms launching initiatives to increase representation and foster inclusive workplace cultures.

Q: How has remote work affected Biglaw operations?

A: Remote work has led Biglaw firms to adopt flexible schedules, invest in technology, and rethink office space requirements, resulting in both challenges and opportunities for employee retention.

Q: What are the main paths for career advancement in Biglaw?

A: Career advancement typically involves progressing from associate to counsel, then to partner, with opportunities for lateral moves or transitioning to in-house legal roles.

Q: How do Biglaw firms use technology to improve legal services?

A: Biglaw firms leverage artificial intelligence, e-discovery tools, and digital case management systems to enhance efficiency, accuracy, and client service.

Q: What controversies have Biglaw firms faced in recent years?

A: Biglaw firms have faced controversies related to workplace culture, diversity, compensation practices, and high-profile departures, often reported and analyzed by Above the Law.

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Above the Law BigLaw: Navigating the Complexities of Elite Legal Practice

The world of BigLaw – those prestigious, high-profile law firms – is often shrouded in mystery and myth. For aspiring lawyers, it represents the pinnacle of success; for those within, it's a demanding, high-stakes environment. This post delves into the realities of BigLaw, exploring its culture, challenges, and the often-discussed perception of being "above the law." We'll unpack the truth behind the headlines, analyzing ethical considerations, career paths, and the impact on both lawyers and society.

H2: The Allure and Illusion of Being "Above the Law"

The phrase "above the law" evokes images of untouchable power and impunity. While no legal entity is truly above the law, the perception persists surrounding BigLaw firms, particularly concerning their influence, resources, and the high-powered individuals they represent. This perception is fueled by several factors:

H3: High-Stakes Litigation and Powerful Clients

BigLaw firms often handle cases with significant financial or political ramifications. Representing powerful corporations, wealthy individuals, or governments naturally brings a level of influence. This can lead to accusations of leveraging resources to influence outcomes, even if those actions remain within legal boundaries. The sheer scale of their operations and the financial stakes involved often overshadow the ethical considerations involved.

H3: The Culture of Winning at All Costs

The intensely competitive environment of BigLaw can foster a culture prioritizing winning over ethical considerations. The pressure to secure lucrative deals and maintain a firm's reputation can sometimes blur the lines of acceptable conduct. This isn't to say that all BigLaw lawyers are unethical; however, the pressure cooker environment can create situations where ethical compromises are made.

H3: Access to Resources and Expertise

BigLaw firms possess vast resources, including top legal talent and extensive research capabilities. This access to expertise can be used ethically and effectively to ensure justice, but it can also be perceived as giving an unfair advantage in legal battles, perpetuating the “above the law” perception.

H2: Ethical Considerations and Accountability in BigLaw

Despite the perception, BigLaw firms are subject to the same laws and ethical regulations as any other legal entity. Professional conduct rules, disciplinary processes, and legal repercussions exist to ensure accountability. However, the enforcement of these rules within the context of BigLaw's power dynamics can be complex and challenging.

H3: Conflicts of Interest and Client Confidentiality

Navigating conflicts of interest is a constant challenge. BigLaw firms frequently represent multiple clients with potentially conflicting interests. Maintaining client confidentiality is paramount, yet sometimes conflicts arise that necessitate careful ethical navigation and, in some cases, even recusal from a case.

H3: The Role of Professional Associations and Regulators

Professional organizations like state bar associations and regulatory bodies play a vital role in overseeing the ethical conduct of lawyers. They investigate complaints, impose sanctions, and set standards for professional responsibility. While these mechanisms exist, their effectiveness in addressing ethical breaches within the powerful world of BigLaw can be debated.

H2: Career Paths and the Reality of BigLaw Life

The path to BigLaw is highly competitive. Years of rigorous academic achievement, demanding internships, and networking are prerequisites. The reality of life within these firms is often demanding, characterized by long hours, intense pressure, and a highly hierarchical structure.

H3: The Billable Hour System and its Impact

The billable hour system, a cornerstone of BigLaw compensation, significantly influences the firm's culture and the lawyers' working lives. Pressure to maximize billable hours can lead to burnout, reduced work-life balance, and potential compromises in quality of work.

H3: Opportunities for Advancement and Specialization

Despite the challenges, BigLaw offers significant opportunities for career advancement and specialization. Lawyers can develop expertise in niche areas of law, gain invaluable experience, and potentially earn substantial salaries. However, this success often comes at a significant personal cost.

H2: The Impact of BigLaw on Society

BigLaw's influence extends beyond individual cases and affects society at large. The firms play a significant role in shaping legal precedents, influencing legislation, and representing powerful interests. This influence necessitates ongoing scrutiny and discussions regarding its impact on social justice and equity.

Conclusion

The perception of BigLaw firms as "above the law" is a complex issue stemming from a confluence of factors – power, resources, and the inherent pressures of the legal profession. While no entity truly exists outside the bounds of the law, the perception remains a subject of ongoing debate and scrutiny. Understanding the intricacies of BigLaw, its ethical considerations, and its impact on society is crucial for both aspiring lawyers and the public alike. Striking a balance between ambition, success, and ethical conduct remains a vital challenge within the elite world of BigLaw.

FAQs

Q1: Are all BigLaw lawyers unethical?

A1: Absolutely not. The vast majority of BigLaw lawyers are ethical and dedicated to upholding the

law. However, the system's inherent pressures can create situations where ethical dilemmas arise.

Q2: What mechanisms are in place to ensure accountability in BigLaw?

A2: State bar associations, regulatory bodies, and internal firm policies are in place to ensure accountability. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms in addressing breaches within powerful firms can be a point of contention.

Q3: What are the long-term consequences of the billable hour system?

A3: The billable hour system can lead to burnout, decreased work-life balance, and potentially compromises in the quality of legal work. Alternatives are being explored, but remain a subject of ongoing discussion.

Q4: How can BigLaw firms improve their ethical practices?

A4: Improvements could include stronger internal ethical guidelines, increased transparency, better training for associates on ethical issues, and robust mechanisms for reporting and investigating ethical breaches.

Q5: Is a career in BigLaw worth it?

A5: This is a highly personal question. A BigLaw career offers high earning potential and career advancement, but it demands significant personal sacrifices. Aspiring lawyers should carefully weigh the pros and cons based on their individual values and career goals.

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above the law biglaw: Big Law Ron Liebman, 2017-01-10 "Big Law has it all. A locomotive drive, a fantastic, appealing, big-hearted narrative voice, and an inside and very entertaining look at the intersection of big law and big business. Smart and truly unputdownable." —John Lescroart As a young partner at Dunn & Sullivan, one of New York's most prestigious law firms, Carney Blake has represented dozens of high-profile clients. But being a pawn of Big Law often means defending the corporate dirt bags of the world—the spillers, the drillers, and the killers. Morality aside, Carney is starting to make a name for himself, despite having a father who resents his success and an unpredictable big brother bent on self-destruction. So when Carney is suddenly asked by his firm's chairman to represent the plaintiffs in a class action lawsuit—and not, as usual, the corporate bad guys—he warily accepts. Maybe they're turning a corner, he thinks. And even if they aren't, when else has a junior partner been assigned such a major case, with a possible billion dollar payout? But Carney can't fool himself for very long. As he digs deeper into the case, he uncovers corruption and maliciously orchestrated schemes that go straight to the top of Dunn & Sullivan—along with the true motives behind his placement on the case. Written by former top litigator Ron Liebman, Big Law is a thrilling, fast-paced roman à clef that exposes the secrecy, deception, and machinations underlining America's most powerful mega-firms.

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facing its defining moment. From law schools to the prestigious firms that represent the pinnacle of a legal career, a crisis is unfolding. News headlines tell part of the story—the growing oversupply of new lawyers, widespread career dissatisfaction, and spectacular implosions of pre-eminent law firms. Yet eager hordes of bright young people continue to step over each other as they seek jobs with high rates of depression, life-consuming hours, and little assurance of financial stability. The Great Recession has only worsened these trends, but correction is possible and, now, imperative. In *The Lawyer Bubble*, Steven J. Harper reveals how a culture of short-term thinking has blinded some of the nation's finest minds to the long-run implications of their actions. Law school deans have ceded independent judgment to flawed U.S. News & World Report rankings criteria in the quest to maximize immediate results. Senior partners in the nation's large law firms have focused on current profits to enhance American Lawyer rankings and individual wealth at great cost to their institutions. Yet, wiser decisions—being honest about the legal job market, revisiting the financial incentives currently driving bad behavior, eliminating the billable hour model, and more—can take the profession to a better place. A devastating indictment of the greed, shortsightedness, and dishonesty that now permeate the legal profession, this insider account is essential reading for anyone who wants to know how things went so wrong and how the profession can right itself once again.

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takes to be a satisfied, sane, and successful lawyer in today's tough legal marketplace. Through incisive in-depth interviews, a top legal headhunter gives the 3rd degree to 15 successful lawyers who run the gamut of the legal profession. Practice areas represented in these profiles range from employment discrimination to corporate defense, from federal white collar prosecution to the legal structuring of complex derivative instruments, from antitrust in DC to trusts & estates in Florida, from divorce in New York to international mergers in Paris, from intellectual property in Silicon Valley to creeping expropriation in India, and from entertainment law in Hollywood to welfare rights in the Bronx. Law firm sizes range from one of the biggest in the world with over two thousand lawyers to a one-lawyer general practice. Career levels range from biglaw partners and courtroom superstars to mid-level associates and ex-lawyers. Though many of the interviewees in *Lawyers at Work* are generic adversaries, the interviewer brings out commonalities in their ways of working, methods of reasoning, and sources of personal motivation. Readers hear from the practitioner's own unbuttoned lips about their career formation, daily work grind, victories and setbacks, guiding principles, professional rewards, and practical advice for aspiring lawyers.

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diagnoses and performing life saving procedures. However, they receive little to no training in business, personal finance, investing, insurance, taxes, estate planning, and asset protection. This book fills in the gaps and will teach you to use your high income to escape from your student loans, provide for your family, build wealth, and stop getting ripped off by unscrupulous financial professionals. Straight talk and clear explanations allow the book to be easily digested by a novice to the subject matter yet the book also contains advanced concepts specific to physicians you won't find in other financial books. This book will teach you how to: Graduate from medical school with as little debt as possible Escape from student loans within two to five years of residency graduation Purchase the right types and amounts of insurance Decide when to buy a house and how much to spend on it Learn to invest in a sensible, low-cost and effective manner with or without the assistance of an advisor Avoid investments which are designed to be sold, not bought Select advisors who give great service and advice at a fair price Become a millionaire within five to ten years of residency graduation Use a Backdoor Roth IRA and Stealth IRA to boost your retirement funds and decrease your taxes Protect your hard-won assets from professional and personal lawsuits Avoid estate taxes, avoid probate, and ensure your children and your money go where you want when you die Minimize your tax burden, keeping more of your hard-earned money Decide between an employee job and an independent contractor job Choose between sole proprietorship, Limited Liability Company, S Corporation, and C Corporation Take a look at the first pages of the book by clicking on the Look Inside feature Praise For The White Coat Investor Much of my financial planning practice is helping doctors to correct mistakes that reading this book would have avoided in the first place. - Allan S. Roth, MBA, CPA, CFP(R), Author of How a Second Grader Beats Wall Street Jim Dahle has done a lot of thinking about the peculiar financial problems facing physicians, and you, lucky reader, are about to reap the bounty of both his experience and his research. - William J. Bernstein, MD, Author of The Investor's Manifesto and seven other investing books This book should be in every career counselor's office and delivered with every medical degree. - Rick Van Ness, Author of Common Sense Investing The White Coat Investor provides an expert consult for your finances. I now feel confident I can be a millionaire at 40 without feeling like a jerk. - Joe Jones, DO Jim Dahle has done for physician financial illiteracy what penicillin did for neurosyphilis. - Dennis Bethel, MD An excellent practical personal finance guide for physicians in training and in practice from a non biased source we can actually trust. - Greg E Wilde, M.D Scroll up, click the buy button, and get started today!

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above the law biglaw: Blood of Tyrants Logan Beirne, 2014-12-02 *Blood of Tyrants* reveals the surprising details of our Founding Fathers' approach to government and this history's impact on today. Delving into forgotten—and often lurid—facts of the Revolutionary War, Logan Beirne focuses on the nation's first commander in chief, George Washington, as he shaped the very meaning of the United States Constitution in the heat of battle. Key episodes of the Revolution illustrate how the Founders dealt with thorny wartime issues: How do we protect citizens' rights when the nation is struggling to defend itself? Who decides war strategy? When should we use military tribunals instead of civilian trials? Should we inflict harsh treatment on enemy captives if it means saving American lives? Beirne finds evidence in previously unexplored documents such as General Washington's letters debating the use of torture, an eyewitness account of the military tribunal that

executed a British prisoner, Founders' letters warning against government debt, and communications pointing to a power struggle between Washington and the Continental Congress. Vivid stories from the Revolution set the stage for Washington's pivotal role in the drafting of the Constitution. The Founders saw the first American commander in chief as the template for all future presidents: a leader who would fiercely defend Americans' rights and liberties against all forms of aggression. Pulling the reader directly into dramatic scenes from history, *Blood of Tyrants* fills a void in our understanding of the presidency and our ingenious Founders' pragmatic approach to issues we still face today.

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above the law biglaw: Big Law in Latin America and Spain Manuel Gómez, Rogelio Pérez-Perdomo, 2017-11-22 This book, part of the Stanford Law School research project on the future of the legal profession, thoroughly examines the future of "big law," defined as the large and mid-size multiservice highly specialized law firms that provide sophisticated, complex and generally costly legal work to multinationals, large and mid-size domestic corporations, and other business clients. By systematically gathering, assessing, and analyzing the best available quantitative and qualitative data on the first tier of the corporate legal services market of Latin America and Spain, and interviewing a broadly representative sample of corporate legal officers, law firm partners, and other stakeholders in each of the countries covered, this book provides a nuanced perspective on changes in "big law" during the last two decades until the present. It also explores the factors that are driving these changes, and the implications for the future of legal profession, legal education and its relationship with the corporate sector and society in general.

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failure to rehabilitate, the impact on social security entitlements, medical care as well as the impact on those who serve – the lawyers, administrators, medical practitioners etc. All are explored in this timely and fascinating book. The contributors include lawyers, psychologists, and medical practitioners from multiple jurisdictions including Australia, the Netherlands, Canada, Italy and the UK.

above the law biglaw: The American Legal Profession Christopher P. Banks, 2023-11-10

This book is a tight and fresh analysis of the American legal profession and its significance to society and its citizens. The book's primary objective is to expose, and correct, the principal misconceptions— myths— surrounding prelaw study, law school admission, law school, and the American legal profession itself. These issues are vitally important to prelaw advisors and instructors in light of the difficult problems caused by the Great Recessions of 2008 and 2020- 2021 and the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Aimed equally at prelaw advisors and potential law students, this book can be used as a supplement in the interdisciplinary undergraduate law-related instructional market, including courses that cater to majors/minors in political science and criminal justice in particular. It can also be used in career counselling, internships, and the extensive paralegal program market. New to the Second Edition • Expanded coverage to include paralegal and legal assistant training. • New material on women and minority law students who are transforming law schools and the profession. • Explores challenges to the legal profession posed by economic recession, COVID-19, high tuition rates, exploding student loan debt, internet technological advances, and global competitive pressures, including legal outsourcing and DIY legal services. • Updated data and tables along with all underlying research.

above the law biglaw: Legal Tech and the Future of Civil Justice David Freeman Engstrom, 2023-02-28 New digital technologies, from AI-fired 'legal tech' tools to virtual proceedings, are transforming the legal system. But much of the debate surrounding legal tech has zoomed out to a nebulous future of 'robo-judges' and 'robo-lawyers.' This volume is an antidote. Zeroing in on the near- to medium-term, it provides a concrete, empirically minded synthesis of the impact of new digital technologies on litigation and access to justice. How far and fast can legal tech advance given regulatory, organizational, and technological constraints? How will new technologies affect lawyers and litigants, and how should procedural rules adapt? How can technology expand - or curtail - access to justice? And how must judicial administration change to promote healthy technological development and open courthouse doors for all? By engaging these essential questions, this volume helps to map the opportunities and the perils of a rapidly digitizing legal system - and provides grounded advice for a sensible path forward.

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law school teaching and scholarship by going beyond crises now besetting the legal academy and examining deeper and longer-lasting challenges. The book argues that the legal academy has long neglected the need to focus teaching and scholarship on the ideals of justice that law fitfully serves, the political origins of law, and the development of a respectful but critical relationship with the legal profession. It suggests reforms to improve the quality of legal education and responds to concerns that law schools eschew the study of justice, rendering students amoralist; that law schools slight the political sources of law, particularly in legislative action; and that law schools have ignored the profession entirely. These areas of neglect have impoverished legal teaching and scholarship as the academy is refashioned in response to current financial exigencies, and addressing them is long overdue.

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