

HOMER GOES TO LAW SCHOOL!

Michael Lurie, a fellow at the National Humanities Center, called my attention to [a study by Derek T. Muller](#), Associate Professor of Law, Pepperdine University School of Law. It includes a graph showing on one Axis the median LSAT scores, and on the other the grade point averages of students in various majors who apply to US law schools. The software for this blog (or my ability to use it) doesn't let me reproduce the graph so click here. (I'll also post it as a PDF on the "Provocations" section of this site). In addition to the graph there is a chart, giving the numbers, major by major, and another graph in [Professor Mueller's blog entry](#) shows which majors are represented among students matriculating in law school.

Classics leads the pack.

To be sure, caution is in order. The graph does not show who actually gets in to Law School, or which law schools they enter.. It's hard to imagine, though, that the average applicant who majored in International Relations and earned a 3.38 GPA and scored 157.3 on the LSAT will be denied admission in favor of a Criminal Justice major with a 3.12 GPA and a LSAT of just over 143.

Josipa Roksa points out to me that the picture of those who actually matriculate is rather different. See <http://excessofdemocracy.com/blog/2014/4/sorting-law-school-matriculants-by-major-lsat-ugpa>. She also points out to me that "selection bias" may be significant, for instance, Natural science majors may have more options on graduation than humanities majors do, so those applying to law school may not be fully representative of the top students in the field.

The figures do not tell which colleges or universities produce the candidates with the highly attractive combination of high GPA and high LSAT scores. The figures for Classics, however, are instructive, since the field is represented in only about 15% of US four year institutions, and those are most often the Ivies and Ivy-look-alikes, flagship state universities, and the more selective liberal arts colleges. No one will be surprised if graduates of these institutions, whether Classics majors or not, will do well in law school admissions.

The figures also omit socio-economic status or race. But the curricular offerings of historically black institutions are currently heavily weighted toward the vocational fields –the ones least likely to produce majors with strong law school qualifications.

Let's be clear: Choosing a major from the top right corner of the graph will not necessarily mean a high LSAT and an easy search for admission. One could argue, for example, that students who concentrate in a challenging discipline such as the Classics are likely to be intelligent, disciplined and hard-working, hence likely to do well on the LSAT. But those qualities, presumably, are precisely the ones Law Schools are looking for. The inference, then, would be if a student likes the Classics or International Relations, or Art History, or Philosophy, or another field near the top right corner of the graph, she should not hesitate to major in that field.

Plenty of voices are telling students to pursue vocationally oriented majors, whether they are interested in the subject matter or not. But what a disservice it would be to tell a student interested in law school to choose a vocational major. At the very bottom both in GPA and in LSAT scores are the most vocational majors: Business Management, Business Administration, Social Work, Criminal Justice. It's hard to imagine that these majors are powerfully attractive to law school admissions officers. The undergraduate major in Law (also pre Law) is also at a disadvantage, especially when compared to humanistic and social scientific fields at the upper right hand corner of the graph.

So go for it! If you are lucky enough to be enrolled in a colleges that offers a strong major in Art History, or Classics, or Philosophy, and if you are genuinely interested in the field, don't hesitate. You may be a stronger candidate for law school as a result.