International Law Writing (L7873-1, one credit)

Professor Benedict Kingsbury

Fall Semester 2012

Overview: This course examines key ideas and approaches in published writing on international law and global justice. Guidance is provided for students on topic selection, developing arguments, research techniques, and linking advocacy and practical international lawyering to foundational thinking. The course is intended to be of help students engaged in projects such as the Global Justice Think Tank or the Jessup Moot, as well as providing a strong grounding for students intending to write a journal paper or a graduation paper on an international topic in other Law School seminars.

Format: The first class will provide some ideas about how to write a good international law paper (topic selection, structure etc), and will cover some current substantive themes in writing about international law. Subsequent classes will discuss examples of published legal writing (especially published student papers). Students in the class will summarize key parts of the argument, identify strong features of the work, and critique weaknesses in the argument and style. The articles studied will be chosen based on student’ fields of interest (international environmental issues, international economic law, human rights, national or global security, etc). The discussion of these articles will also provide an opportunity to learn about some interesting issues in current international law. Readings will be kept short, recognizing that this is only a one-credit course. Toward the end of the semester students will complete their own very brief draft (approx. 2000 words) – this could be a scoping and topic summary for a future paper, a short analysis of an interesting sub-issue within a bigger project, a casenote, etc. These will be circulated and presented briefly in class, for constructive comments by classmates and the Instructor. The instructor will be very pleased to meet with students about their writing interests and possible topics early in the semester and then periodically as the course progresses.

Class Meetings: The class is currently scheduled to meet weekly on Fridays, 1.40pm-2.35pm, in the Borchard Conference Room. At our first meeting we will discuss whether it may be possible to plan instead to meet less frequently but for longer (e.g. meet every second week, 12.40pm-2.35pm), depending on students’ schedules.

Expectations: Students are expected to attend class regularly, to be prepared in advance for class, to participate actively, and turn in work on time. Assessment will be based on class attendance, participation, and writing.
For class on Fri 24 August:

We will discuss:

(i) Selecting a good international law writing topic and angle
(ii) Structuring a written argument

Future classes:

An example of a possible reading for subsequent classes (depending on student topic interests):

Jessica Rutledge, ‘Wait a second, is that rain or herbicide…’, 46 Wake Forest Law Review 1079 (2011)