

Northwestern

PRITZKER SCHOOL OF LAW

Master of Science in Law

MSL Recommended Reading List

This is an optional reading list. Many of the topics you will explore in the MSL program are covered in these books, including the American legal system, business and entrepreneurship, innovation, intellectual property and patents, contracts, and writing. These books will help you get a head start and prepare you for your MSL coursework.

Title: [The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine](#)

Author: Lewis ISBN: 978-0393338829

Description: *The Big Short* tells the story of the financial crash of 2007-08. Michael Lewis employs his trademark technique of exploring the personal histories of several Wall Street outsiders who were betting against the grain, and, in so doing, sheds light on the big picture of what happened.

Why on the list: This book will help the reader develop an understanding of financial markets and financial regulation, which are important background topics for the MSL curriculum. Some of the instructors in our later courses – such as IP Valuation and Public & Private Markets in IP – have suggested that students should learn about financial markets prior to taking those classes. Plus, it is a good read!

Title: [A Civil Action](#)

Author: Harr ISBN: 978-0679772675

Description: This book is about a toxic torts case that took place in a town near Boston in the 1980's. It tells the story of a young lawyer who handled the case on behalf of 8 families, who either lost their children to leukemia or whose children had leukemia. The basis of the lawsuit was the discovery of a leukemia cluster in the town, which the families only discovered years after their children were afflicted with the disease. The lawsuit took many years, many lawyers, many twists and turns and a lot of money.

Why on list: This book has been described as a “legal thriller” for scientists and engineers. It reads like a novel, but is a true story. It provides a great way to learn about the legal system in the US without having to read a textbook about it.

Title: [Contracts in a Nutshell](#)

Author: Skrocki ISBN: 978-0314169242

Description: *Contracts in a Nutshell* is a succinct summary of the fundamentals of contracts, covering formation of contracts, restitution, the statute of frauds, contract interpretation, contract modification, remedies, performance, and third-party beneficiaries.

Why on list: This book will give you a head start on one of the required classes in the program: Contract Law & Design. When we asked current and graduated MSL students for advice, one suggestion we got was to add this book to the summer reading list, so we did.

Title: [The Elements of Style](#)

Author: Strunk Jr.& White ISBN: 978-0205309023

Description: A writing style guide that focuses on: grammar and punctuation; principles of writing; common word-usage and spelling errors; and matters of form.

Why on list: This is an awesome, easy book to follow – it contains some very important principles that will have an immediate and positive effect on the quality of your writing. Even students who think they write well will benefit from this quick refresher.

Title: [The Innovator's Dilemma: The Revolutionary Book That Will Change the Way You Do Business](#)

Author: Christensen ISBN: 978-0062060242

Description: *The Innovator's Dilemma* explores how the creation of new “disruptive” technologies can cause companies to lose market share, even companies that do everything right, such as listening to their customers, watching the marketplace, and investing in research and development. Using the lessons of successes and failures from leading companies, *The Innovator's Dilemma* presents a set of rules for capitalizing on the phenomenon of disruptive innovation.

Why on list: A very interesting book about business and entrepreneurship. Not uncontroversial. It raises issues that will be relevant throughout the business/entrepreneurship parts of the MSL curriculum.

Title: [Law 101: Everything You Need to Know About American Law](#)

Author: Feinman ISBN: 978-0199341696

Description: This book provides a clear introduction to American law. It covers all the main subjects taught usually in the first year of law school, and discusses many facets of the American

legal tradition, including constitutional law, the litigation process, and criminal, property, and contracts law.

Why on list: This book provides a solid overview of US law and the structure of the legal system. It was assigned in the Legal and Regulatory Process class last year. It is not a super quick read, but will help you develop an understanding of the structure and substance of law that will be relevant throughout the MSL program.

Title: [Law School Without Fear: Strategies for Success](#)

Author: Shapo ISBN: 978-1599414195

Description: A concise guide for beginning law students, this book contains information about law and the legal system, and also information about how to study law. Topics such as the court system, reading cases, legal reasoning, legal language, policy considerations, and even writing are discussed.

Why on list: Written originally for JD students, this book provides a nice overview of what it is like to be in law school, and what are some foundational things to know before going in. Parts of this book – such as the chapter on exams – won't be relevant to MSL students, but, on the whole, this book covers many important and basic ideas about studying law. (The first 13 chapters are most relevant to MSL students.)

Title: [Naked Economics: Undressing the Dismal Science](#)

Author: Wheelan ISBN: 978-0393337648

Description: A book about economics that won't put you to sleep. Demystifying buzzwords, laying bare the truths behind oft-quoted numbers, and answering the questions you were always too embarrassed to ask, the breezy Naked Economics gives readers the tools they need to engage with pleasure and confidence in the deeply relevant, not so dismal science.

Why on list: This economics introduction is a quick read and will be useful for entering MSL students who don't have an economics background, or for those who would like a concise review.

Title: [Not So Obvious: An Introduction to Patent Law and Strategy](#)

Author: Schox ISBN: 978-1492741794

Description: After an introduction to intellectual property, this book answers the questions: How does the patent system work? What is an invention? Is the invention patentable? When should the patent application be filed? Does the invention infringe any patents? Who owns the patent application?

Why on list: Pretty obvious – this is a relatively short primer on the patent system that will get you started understanding the terminology, process, and basic ideas of the patent world.

Title: [Plain English for Lawyers](#)

Author: Wydick ISBN: 978-1594601514

Description: Plain English for Lawyers has become a classic in writing instruction for law students – it promotes the more modern trend toward a clear, plain style of legal writing.

Why on list: A great book – even for non-lawyers – that will help improve written communication. Everyone should read either this book or The Elements of Style mentioned above. (Or both!)

Title: [The Startup of You](#)

Author: Hoffman and Casnocha ISBN: 978-1847940803

Description: This book focuses on career development, drawing on lessons learned from the start-up community. The book advocates that you take an expansive view of your career, recognizing opportunities and managing risks. It suggests that you bring a level of consciousness, flexibility, and an “entrepreneurial mindset” to planning and understanding the trajectory of your career.

Why on list: An MSL student once described his classmates as “career entrepreneurs.” By coming to this program, MSL students show that they are willing to forge their own career paths, and this book provides a framework for students to use in doing this. This book emphasizes approaches that we reinforce in the MSL program: understanding your own aspirations and values, strengthening your professional networks, taking a very active role in seeking out opportunities, recognizing and being open to opportunities along the way, and many others.