Frequently Asked Questions

LSJ students learning alongside inmates in the innovative mixed enrollment course at the Washington State Reformatory. Photo credit: UW Today

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About LSJ in General

How competitive is LSJ?

**Answer:** Applicants admitted to LSJ are usually strong students, but what makes a student strong is rather complex. Because this is an academic program that explores law in social science perspectives, students should show particular aptitude in social science courses. They should also be able to communicate clearly and concisely, and show an interest in the academic topics and social issues discussed in LSJ classes. Admission is based on a student's academic record and his/her essay. The number of admitted students varies by quarter, based on the characteristics of each applicant pool and the number of students the program can admit. All students who have completed the minimum requirements and who are interested in the major are strongly encouraged to apply.

LSJ is competitive because we cannot admit all who seek to pursue the major. Students should have a back-up major in case they are not admitted to LSJ. The best back-up major will vary depending on student interests, but it should be a major that has either open admission or minimum requirement admission.

Do you have a graduate program in LSJ?

**Answer:** The Law, Societies, and Justice Department does not offer graduate degrees. The Comparative Law and Society Studies Center (CLASS Center) does have a graduate certificate program, the details of which are available under the Programs and Courses tab on this website.

About Jobs and Careers

With a major in LSJ, what job can I get?
Our program is designed to not only allow students to focus their studies topically, but also to encourage the development of skills that can be applied in almost any job or career path. These skills include: written communication, analytical thinking, logical reasoning, and the capacity to synthesize complex information about social and cultural dynamics. Graduates from LSJ currently work in NGOs (non-governmental organizations), criminal justice, law, policy development, education, and government. Many of our students also choose to continue on to graduate or professional degrees in: political science, sociology, anthropology, geography, international studies, ethnic studies, women studies, social work, public administration, journalism, education, and law.

LSJ is an ideal major for students interested in the practices of institutions meant to create justice, law, human and civil rights, and related social structures. Since LSJ is not a vocational or pre-professional program, it best serves students interested in these topics even if their career goals are not decided.

Students are best advised to choose a major not based on vocational considerations but rather on intellectual passions. Multiple resources exist for students to explore more particular career paths. Students should visit the UW Center for Career Services; volunteer or intern as often as possible; talk with faculty, advisers, graduate students and undergraduates about their plans; attend career fairs; construct resume and job hunting skills; and be active in the community.

Is this the best major for me if I want to work in law enforcement?

Answer: For students interested in pursuing a career in law enforcement, probation, or corrections this major offers a different approach than the more traditional ‘administration of justice’ or ‘criminal justice’ majors. There are a lot of vital skills which can be gained from an LSJ major that are valued in criminal justice careers: analytical and logical thinking, written communication, oral communication, appreciation of different cultures and life experiences, and complex problem solving. Because fields like probation, corrections, and law enforcement are very competitive, it is a good idea to supplement your education with as much interning and volunteer work as you can while you are a student at UW.

About Law School

Is this the best major for me if I want to go to law school?

Answer: For students interested in continuing on to law school, this major offers a chance to develop some of the most important skills that juris doctor programs want to see: skillful reading, articulate writing, logical reasoning and analysis, and clear oral communication. Because these skills are learned while studying topics related to law, many students find it to be an ideal preparation for applying to law school.

Law schools are less interested in a student’s major than his/her grades and mastery of key skills. Those who wish to attend law school are advised to major in a topic that captivates them intellectually. Passionate interest in subject matter will translate into better skill acquisition and better grades.

How to Prepare for Success in LSJ

I am transferring to the UW from another institution, how can I improve my chances of getting into LSJ as a major?

Answer: The first task is getting into the University of Washington so that you can complete the last prerequisite course(s) before applying to the major. When applying to the university, you should certainly mention your interest in this major, even if you still have prerequisite courses to complete. The Admissions staff knows that one of the LSJ prerequisites has to be completed after being admitted, so not having it completed will not keep you from getting into UW.
Transfer students who are admitted to LSJ usually have good grades, but they also show a genuine interest in the study of law and justice. Our program is built on the research and scholarly goals of our faculty rather than on a certain career field. As a result, any evidence of commitment to the academic field carries more weight than a student's wish for a certain career after college.

I am not yet an LSJ major and I am about to register for classes. What classes will be the best choices now?

**Answer:** It is fine to take LSJ classes before being admitted to the major. Students should try to give preference to the classes in the LSJ Core Course list over those in the subfields. The Core Courses are meant to ground the knowledge covered in more detail in the subfield courses, so taking them first improves your chance of doing well in the upper level coursework.

If you are looking for non-LSJ classes that will complement your LSJ studies, consider taking classes that explore a part of the world you know nothing about. You might also consider a class that expands your knowledge of modern history, politics, international relations, philosophy, geography, culture, gender, race, or ethnicity.

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