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May 2013 E-newsletter Faculty Spotlight: Usha Rodrigues

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Faculty Spotlight: Usha Rodrigues

News @ Georgia Law May 2013 Faculty Profile



Name: Usha Rodrigues

Title: Associate Professor of Law

Hometown: Potomac, MD

Law school / graduation year: University of Virginia / 2001

Other degree(s) / institution(s): B.A. in English / Georgetown University; M.A. in Comparative Literature/ University of Wisconsin-Madison

1. What influenced your decision to go to law school?

I have always loved school. I was in graduate school at the time, but wasn't really enjoying it, and was threatened with a lawsuit regarding a security deposit. It was probably an idle threat, but it infuriated me and made me think seriously about law school for the first time —much to my mother's delight!

2. What did you do before entering the legal teaching academy?

I clerked on the Third Circuit for the Honorable Thomas L. Ambro and then practiced corporate law in the D.C. office of Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati.

3. What made you decide to become a professor?

I think academia is in my blood. My father was an English professor and my mother was a medical school professor for many years. I went to graduate school thinking I wanted to be a professor, of course, and then when I went to law school I had the same idea in the back of my head. While in school and clerking I kept looking for something I felt passionate about researching and writing about, but I didn't find it until I started practicing corporate law.

4. What do you enjoy most about your job? What is the most rewarding aspect of being a professor?

I enjoy most about the job that I get to choose what I work on and that I love what I do. The most rewarding part of my job is introducing students to the beauty of business organizations. I was an English major, and I came to law school with no knowledge of business at all. If you'd told me that in 10 years I'd be practicing corporate law— let alone teaching it—I would have laughed. What I love most is showing those liberal arts types how much fun corporate law can be.

5. What type of influence do you hope to have on your students?

I hope to help my students become better lawyers and better people.

6. What made you decide to specialize in corporate law?

I came to corporate law by elimination. Everyone told me that since I was a good writer I should be a litigator. After doing well my first year in law school, they said I should be an appellate litigator. But my 2L summer I worked in a law firm in litigation and found it incredibly boring. The culmination of the summer program was a mock deposition, where the summer associates deposed a witness. I knew that if you were lucky as a young associate at a big firm you would get to do a deposition. It's a plum assignment. And I was bored sick even as I was asking the questions. In desperation, I decided I'd try corporate law. Once I started practicing, I fell in love with the fast pace of the work and the feeling that I was actually helping get things done, rather than arguing over scraps (no offense to the litigators!).

7. What do you enjoy most about this area of the law?

In terms of theory, the fact that there are a multiplicity of organizational forms all trying to do one basic thing: aggregate capital, manage it and distribute profits. That's the goal. But how you choose to run the railroad —via corporation, partnership or LLC— all depends on the tradeoffs you want to make. In terms of practice, what I love about corporate law is that it moves. If you don't like what's on your desk, it will probably be gone by the end of the week, almost certainly by the end of the month. When I was a paralegal I was hired to work on a case that had been going on long before I got there, and continued a year after I left. That's not how corporate law works.

8. What advice would you give to current law students wanting to practice in this field?

In any field, the advice I would give would be the oracle of Delphi's: Know Thyself. Think about what makes you happy, what you want out of a job. As I explained above, I like things to move and not to know exactly what challenges will come up in a given day. The other piece of advice is always to be thinking about exit options. You may like your job now, but where is it going to take you? Where do you want to be in five years?

9. Are you currently conducting any research? If so, what is its focus?

The blurring line between public and private corporations.

10. What is your favorite thing about living in Athens?

How easy it is to live here and raise a family.

11. What do you enjoy doing in your free time? What are your hobbies?

Running, both alone and after my three children.

12. How do you stay up to date on legal issues and trends?

I read the Wall Street Journal regularly, and then rely on the Economist, the Financial Times and legal blogs.



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