

PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL LAW AT A GLANCE

(for more detailed information on careers in public international law, see

<http://www.law.harvard.edu/current/careers/opia/public-interest-law/public-international/index.html>)

- **What is public international law?**

- Public international law = relationship between and among the states.
- Private international law = treaties, conventions, model laws, and legal instruments that regulate private relationships across borders.

- **Practice settings**

- ***Intergovernmental agencies***

- Examples:

- United Nations
 - Central Legal Office, as well as sub-agencies such as OHCHR, UNDP, etc.
 - See *OPIA Insider's Guide to UN Jobs and Internships* (on website)
- World Bank
- Development Banks (African, Asian, etc.)
- Council of Europe, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, etc.
- International Courts
 - Criminal (both prosecution and chambers)
 - International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (winding down/mostly appellate)
 - International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
 - Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia
 - International Criminal Court
 - Non-criminal
 - International Court of Justice (UN body/settles civil disputes between states)
 - Inter-American Court for Human Rights
 - European Court of Justice

- ***Government***

- Foreign (ex: Government of Libya, South Africa)
- United States
 - Nearly every federal agency has some public international work; agencies with the largest portfolios are:
 - Department of State
 - Office of the Legal Advisor, as well as policy Bureaus such as Democracy, Human Rights and Labor; Global Criminal Justice, etc.
 - USAID
 - General Counsel's Office, as well as policy branches such as the Rule of Law Division, etc.
 - Department of Justice (DOJ)
 - Criminal Division
 - International Affairs Office; Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section; OPDAT
 - Tax Division
 - Antitrust Division
 - Treasury Department
 - General Counsel's Office, as well as policy offices such as Office of Foreign Assets Control, Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, etc.
 - Department of Defense
 - Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
 - Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR)
 - U.S. Commission on International Trade
 - Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC)
 - Capitol Hill
 - Foreign relations/international affairs/military committees

- State/local government
 - Not as common; some trade work in economic development agencies
 - **Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)**
 - Equivalent of nonprofits in U.S.; mission-driven advocacy or service organizations
 - Two categories:
 - International (large, with offices around the world = INGOs)
 - Ex: Human Rights Watch, International Rescue Committee
 - Local (serve a particular region, country, municipality, specialty)
 - Ex: Legal Resources Center (Ghana); Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor
 - Many local organization work with INGOs and other partners in the international community
 - Experience with local NGOs or the local offices of INGOs highly valued; this grassroots experience is called “field work” and it is a prerequisite in most instances to working with a US-based international organization
- **Issue Areas**
 - Nearly limitless; biggest groupings are:
 - Human rights
 - Historically, enforcing civil and political rights, including right to life and civic participation
 - Includes: freedom from torture, rape and slavery; freedom from persecution based on religion or ethnicity; freedom of expression
 - More recently broadened to include economic, cultural and social rights
 - Ex: minimum labor standards; rights to food and housing
 - Humanitarian law
 - Laws of war, or law of armed conflict
 - Includes: protection of those not taking part in fighting; restrictions on the means and methods of warfare
 - Criminal justice
 - Prosecution, defense or adjudication of crimes against humanity, crimes of aggression, genocide and war crimes
 - Rule of law/transitional justice
 - Establishing universally-recognized norms and legal/political mechanisms of enforcement
 - Includes: developing or reforming constitutions, legislation, court systems, police and prison norms
 - Development
 - Work designed to improve the quality of life of people around the world
 - Includes: poverty alleviation; food and water security; capacity building; healthcare and education; disaster preparedness; infrastructure; sustainability
 - See OPIA Guide to International Development
- **Types of Work**
 - Generally, a lot of variety; both traditional and non-traditional
 - Traditional legal work:
 - Legal advising
 - In general counsel’s offices of intergovernmental organizations, federal and state government agencies, and in some NGOs, lawyers serve as advisors to policy makers, assisting in conforming policy aspirations to governing laws and treaties
 - Ex: rule of law lawyers may provide advice to a country trying to further develop their corporate law structure or criminal justice system
 - Ex: development lawyers may provide advice on how the commercial laws of a country in which their organization works will impact their development goals
 - Can also involve the review of contracts, permitting, licensing, intellectual property rights
 - Legislative work
 - Ex: assisting in the drafting of a new constitution
 - Ex: assisting in the drafting of new national legislation

- Negotiation
 - Can include negotiation of laws and regulations, contracts, shareholder agreements, etc.
- Litigation
 - Can be individual cases or impact (advocacy) litigation
 - Most public international litigation impacting U.S. handled through DOJ and State Department
 - International litigation can also be experienced through foreign government, IGOs, NGOs (though most IGOs and traditional international human rights groups do not do much litigation)
 - Most international criminal prosecutors begin career practicing criminal law in their own country (State AG, DOJ, US Attorney, PD, etc.)
 - MUST develop domestic litigation experience first before applying for a permanent position with an NGO, IGO or international court; experience can come from clerkships, trial practice, prosecution, defense, or litigation within a nonprofit organization.
- Non-traditional work
 - Education and outreach
 - Human rights investigation and documentation
 - Monitoring abuses
 - Public/community engagement
 - Use of media
 - Lobbying of governments/IGOs/corporations (to withhold aid, change views, etc.)
- **Summer internships**
 - Do your research
 - Search out past interns – what was the experience like? Structured or unstructured? Legal or non-legal skills? Supervision? Necessary languages?
 - Attend OPIA's international job search session in November
 - Be aware of events/developments in region that could affect your internship
 - Build language skills and cultural competence (e.g., work abroad)
- **Post-graduate opportunities**
 - No clear and guaranteed path leading to a career in this field
 - Fewer openings, less likely to offer formal training for young attorneys, usually prefer to hire attorneys with 3-5 years experience
 - However, opportunities for entry-level work do exist
 - IGOs:
 - UN and World Bank do hire, but extremely difficult to get into (see OPIA UN Guide)
 - Clerkships at international courts, but often must bring your own funding
 - Some fellowships (usually HLS fellowships)
 - Federal government:
 - Entry-level programs at DOJ, State Department, CIA
 - Presidential Management Fellowship (two-year, paid policy and management fellowship in executive agencies; can be used to find opportunities in agencies that don't otherwise hire at the entry level)
 - Consider foreign service for career diplomat
 - Capitol Hill hiring de-centralized; networking is key
 - State government
 - Some entry-level AG and legislative honors programs
 - NGOs
 - Primarily fellowships; many support international work
 - Ex: Fulbright; Rotary; Harvard University travelling fellowships; Human Rights Program fellowships; HLS fellowships
 - May require taking short-term positions or seeking work as a consultant
 - Judicial clerkship can give you a leg up for US-based jobs, but doubtful whether advantage with international employers
 - Value of networking CANNOT BE OVERSTATED

- Attend panels and events to meet people who are engaged in projects of interest
- Talk to faculty with international experience
- Connect with students who have done relevant work before or during law school
- Connect with alumni working in your area of interest
- **International employer “likes”**
 - Commitment to mission
 - Experience working in international sector
 - Extensive experience abroad for NGOs (in particular, for human rights, international health, development, humanitarian assistance)
 - Many US- based NGOs will not hire until international experience abroad (work during law school may be sufficient)
 - Regional expertise or knowledge is critical for most IGOs and NGOs
 - Relevant practical experience
 - Journal experience less critical (exception: government jobs)
 - Use clinics and winter terms to supplement summer internships
 - Ex: Human rights clinic, immigration and refugee clinic (exposure to international clients/politics of foreign countries)
 - Language skills (proficiency is often important)
 - Take language classes if skills are weak
 - Maturity and judgment
 - Being a self-starter is critical
 - Relevant coursework
 - International law, conflict of laws, comparative law, negotiation
 - Consider cross-registration at Kennedy etc. if not available at HLS
 - Many employers look favorably on candidates who have published on subjects relevant to the job