

Teaching International Intellectual Property Law

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Intellectual property law was in the backwater a few decades ago. The Section on Intellectual Property Law of the Association of American Law Schools was not founded until the early 1980s, and the creation of intellectual property specialty programs was only a recent phenomenon. As senior legal scholars reminisced, when they began their career, they would have been lucky to find a school that would allow them to teach a class on intellectual property law. The lack of interest in the subject has changed quickly, however. In the past decade, intellectual property law teaching has come of age, and intellectual property law courses are now offered in virtually every American law school.

As part of the Symposium on Teaching Intellectual Property Law, this essay reflects on the teaching of international intellectual property law. It begins by identifying three different stages of development of an international intellectual property law course. Going from the pre-TRIPs era to the post-TRIPs era, the essay shows how the growing complexity of the international intellectual property regime has made teaching the subject increasingly challenging. The essay then focuses on these challenges and examines why international intellectual property law should be taught in the first place, what materials law teachers can cover, and how they can effectively present these materials. By offering both questions and suggestions, the essay invites readers to evaluate and rethink the design of an international intellectual property law course.