

Questions for Professor Robert Vischer Shoulda been a cowboy?

How is your book project coming along? (*Common Good: Reclaiming the Space between Person and State*)

I finished a draft of the book this summer, and hopefully it will be approved for publication by the time students are reading this.



In the past you practiced corporate litigation at a large Chicago law firm and now most of your scholarly work (and the classes you teach) focus on ethics and religion. Is that just a coincidence or is there something you want to tell us?

The bleakness of life at a law firm didn't drive me to religion, if that's what you're asking. I think private practice gets a bad rap, sometimes well-deserved, but not always. I really enjoyed the work of

being a lawyer, except that I didn't have much opportunity to write about the issues that I cared about the most – i.e., the intersection of law, religion, and ethics.

You attended Harvard Law where you were an editor of the law review - very intimidating. You have also taught at St. John's University Law School and I'm guessing have been to a number of other law schools along the way. Describe how you ended up at St. Thomas?

I've always wanted to invest myself in a project that's bigger than myself. Much of what we do in academic circles is devoted to enhancing our own scholarly prestige. Put simply, we want to make ourselves seem smarter than everybody else. St. Thomas provides the opportunity to break out of that cycle of self-absorption. The faculty members here have left other, more established law schools to help build an institution, creating a new sort of law school that

adds a distinctive and important voice to our conversation about law.

What do you like about teaching? Do you think you will continue to teach?

I really enjoy helping students realize that they're smart enough to be successful lawyers who can make an impact. Law school can be intimidating, but with a little bit of encouragement and help, it can be a real source of empowerment. It is important for students not just to know

how to think critically, but to appreciate the personal and social value of thinking critically. I plan to keep on teaching until someone tells me that it's time to stop.

If you were not a law professor what do you think you would be? What would you want to be?

I briefly toyed with the idea of getting a PhD and teaching theology, but I had horrible visions of toiling away for years learning German and writing a never-read paper on the contributions of Johannes Scotus Eriugena to the realist-nominalist debate. In reality, I would probably be in private practice somewhere. I like being a lawyer.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Convincing my wife to marry me. Or maybe being a ball boy for the Chicago Sting when I was eleven.

What is your greatest regret?

I generally believe that we learn from our mistakes. To the extent that I have significant regrets from my life, they're probably not ideally suited to being published in the Tommie Law News. There's only one I feel comfortable sharing: the '84 Cubs.

Which living person do you most admire?

My mother.

What is your favorite motto?

A stitch in time saves nine? Don't fire 'til you see the whites of their eyes? Where's the beef? Am I really supposed to have a favorite motto? That's like having a favorite wildflower or a favorite cheer. I think it's evidence of too much time on your hands.

If not yourself, who would you be?

Who would I be if I was not me? Hopefully someone nice who bathes regularly. These questions are starting to make me woozy and light-headed. What sort of brownies are you eating down in the Tommie Law News office?