

Professor John Mikhail joins Law Center faculty

by Victoria Taylor, 1L
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The second subject in our profile of new faculty, Professor John Mikhail comes to Georgetown University Law Center after a fascinating and diverse career in many disciplines.

Professor Mikhail received his PhD in Philosophy at Cornell University, where he wrote a dissertation on the analogy between rules of justice and rules of grammar, which recent scientific discoveries have suggested are innate. His studies led him to MIT's Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences, where he was a Lecturer and Research Affiliate and worked closely with leading cognitive scientists like Noam Chomsky, Steven Pinker, and Elizabeth Spelke in developing an approach to moral psychology modeled on Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar. While in Cambridge, Mikhail also taught courses in government and public policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and earned a Dean's Award for excellence in teaching.

Always wishing to study law, Mikhail proceeded to Stanford Law School, where he became Senior Article Editor of the Stanford Law Review and the Senior Submissions Editor of the Stanford Journal of International Law. Upon graduation, he remained at Stanford as a Visiting Scholar and joined the Palo Alto office of Simpson, Thatcher & Bartlett.

Before beginning this fall at Georgetown, Mikhail clerked for Judge Rosemary Barkett of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit in Miami, Florida. While in Miami, Professor Mikhail, his wife Sarah and their daughter Hannah made their home in trendy South Beach, where he enjoyed nightly runs with Hannah on the beach. This past August, Mikhail became the father for the second time with the birth of his son, Andrew.

Expressing excitement at being in D.C. and even more enthusiasm at joining the Law Center, Professor Mikhail identifies the breadth and depth of the faculty as a major drawing point. "Georgetown has such a strong and deep faculty in so many of the fields in which I'm interested, such as constitutional law, international law, and legal theory. I was also impressed with the law school's commitment to social justice. It's truly an honor to join such an outstanding community of lawyer-scholars."

This semester, Professor Mikhail is teaching a seminar on Legal Justice for Curriculum B 1L students. In the spring of 2005, he will lead a seminar in Law, Cognitive Science and Human Rights. Mikhail says, "The course addresses human rights from a variety of philosophical and psychological perspectives. A natural question to ask is whether the cognitive revolution in psychology has any implications, positive or negative, for our understanding of moral and legal norms."



Photo by Rhoda Baer, Courtesy of Georgetown Office of Law Alumni, Development & Public Relations \ Professor John Mikhail, new GULC faculty member.