

# Visiting professors lecture future lawyers

Four experts from leading American universities have joined the teaching staff at the Faculty of Law. Founded over ten years ago, the visiting professor programme is an opportunity for law students to learn about other legal systems and the recent trends, as well as to compare various approaches to legal issues.

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PHOTO: MARTIN INDRUCH

In 2012 Masaryk University launched the “visiting professor project” in order to improve the offer of courses taught in foreign languages. It was also a necessity of sorts. Present-day Vice-Dean for Foreign Relations Michal Radvan was a coordinator for Erasmus programmes and was in regular contact with experts from foreign universities asking about teaching opportunities in Brno.

“The management of the faculty evaluated the possibilities of semester-long courses and the foreign language skills of its students in the field of professional English, and decided to give the visiting professors the opportunity to teach their own courses as ‘compulsory electives’. When the programme started we would contact foreign lecturers and actively offer the opportunity but it has since become very attractive, so now lecturers contact us and it is up to us to choose,” Radvan explains, adding that the selection process is based on the topic of the course, the personality of the lecturer and his or her reputation and teaching and scholarly background.

Opening a course can be simple, fast and flexible, which is something some other institutions cannot do. Currently the Faculty of Law offers around forty courses taught by visiting professors per year. They are extremely popular among Czech and international students alike. The courses offer an insight into foreign legal systems and an opportunity for language skill improvement. Students also appreciate different teaching methods and approaches. In 2023 alone, 43 courses were taught which were attended by over 1,200 students. Their lecturers come from the United States, Ukraine, Great Britain, Turkey, Poland, South Africa, Japan and Ireland. Even this spring semester has a lot to offer in terms of interesting courses taught by foreign lecturers.

The faculty regularly shares its experience with the programme at regular event held by the European Law Faculties Association, International Association of Law Schools, Rotterdam Law Network. The management of the Faculty of Law believes that its staff will see similar opportunities offered by foreign universities.



## Students enjoy my approach as a political and human rights activist

Professor Paul Von Blum from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) has had lectures at the Faculty of Law many times, both as free-access lectures and courses. For this year’s March week he prepared the topic “The U.S. Supreme Court and Contemporary American Divisions”.

“Several years ago, then United States State Department sponsored a tour for me to speak at universities throughout the Czech Republic. Later, a few of them invited me to return, including Masaryk. I found Masaryk to be the most exciting of all the places, especially because I have had the ability to teach several intensive classes both in the Faculty of Law and in the Department of English and American Studies. Moreover, I have found Brno itself to be an especially likeable city, full of cultural attractions, a tremendous student population, and very easy to navigate,” he explains.

“I believe that my long record as a faculty member at the University of California allows me to enrich the Masaryk curriculum both at the Faculty of Law and at the Department of English and American Studies. I have had the privilege of teaching many classes over the years and also publishing many books and articles during my career. Those works closely inform my teaching both in the U.S. and in Brno. I’m both a lawyer and an art and cultural historian, so I’m able to bring both specialties, I think, into my Masaryk teaching. Also, I have been a close follower of American political and legal development and I also bring those into my teaching. I write regularly about those topics and I make regular media appearances in print and in electronic media. Finally, I have a long record as a political and civil rights activist. This record enters my teaching regularly and I think that it adds substantially to my effectiveness as a university teacher because it brings in a personal dimension that students generally enjoy,” Blum adds.

In addition to Blum’s lectures, students attend those by professor Michael Seng from the University of Illinois Chicago who is a leading expert in constitutional law, jurisprudence and the system of federal courts in the United States, or professor Jeffrey Schmitt from the University of Dayton (Ohio) and his lectures on individual rights in the United States, and Judge Kathleen Lang from Indiana whose course is titled Criminal Law and Trial by Jury in the United States.