



Professor Chris Hines joined the faculty this fall and is teaching contracts, comparative law, and international business transactions courses this coming year. Professor Hines received his J.D. from Columbia Law School in 2002, where he served on the *Columbia Journal of Asian Law*; and his B.A., *cum laude*, from Yale University in 1998, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

Professor Hines is an experienced corporate and securities attorney, having represented numerous clients in domestic and cross-border transactions at leading international law firms in the District of Columbia, New York, San Francisco, and Tokyo. His articles have appeared in such publications as the *Columbia Business Law Review* and *Business Visions*.

Why did you become a professor?

As many have said before me, being a law professor is the greatest job in the world. However, it did take me a few years to come

to this epiphany of sorts. In truth, many of my mentors over the years have suggested that I explore the academic path, especially once I started publishing some articles. Looking back now, it's clear that they all saw something inside me that took a little more time for me to realize. I suppose what they all saw was my passion for the law, but more generally in my passion for ideas -- exploring, discussing and understanding ideas in a critical and comprehensive manner.

Why NIU Law?

My discussions with the faculty throughout the recruitment process as well as the on-campus visit all suggested that joining the NIU Law faculty was the right fit. Having been trained at law firms that are generally known for their collegial cultures, I was delighted to learn that a similar culture prevails here. In addition, the focus on diversity under Dean Rosato's leadership was of great interest to me. As background, I grew up in Hawaii in a multi-cultural family -- my father is Caucasian and my mother is Japanese. In addition, my wife is Chinese-American and was born in Singapore. So I am thrilled at the attention to diversity that prevails here, which I believe will further strengthen our institution as the globalization trend continues.

What led to your interest in Contracts, Comparative Law, Corporate Finance and International Business Transactions?

I believe that there are two main reasons why I enjoy working in these fields. First, the law of contracts concerns the private law of individuals, corporations, and other legal persons. Given the historical development of the law from the common law in medieval England to the present UCC statutes in the various states, one would be hard pressed to underestimate the significant influence that contracts have on our everyday lives. Think about your most important rights and responsibilities -- employment, mortgage or lease, financial accounts, utilities -- they are all subject to an underlying contract. Thus, a study of contract law and related disciplines is an inquiry into the fundamental economic relationships that weave into all of our lives.

Second, my interest in comparative or international disciplines stems from the desire to ask fundamental questions of a legal system, which a comparative approach can provide. Isn't it surprising that even after 150 years we still read the works of Tocqueville, a Frenchman, when trying to better understand our own democracy? It seems that at times the most insightful thoughts about the law can be offered from those without its ambit -- which is precisely what fascinates me about the comparative approach.

How will your professional experience benefit you as a professor?

I think having some "real world" experience will be helpful in both my teaching and scholarship since it provides me with a practical perspective to problems. There is also the notion that, when teaching a contracts case for instance to first-year

students, I can move the discussion to how certain legal concepts can actually play out in practice. By providing some color, so to speak, on how legal issues can play out in everyday life, I hope that my lectures and scholarship will be accessible to a wider audience of listeners and readers.

What do you think your biggest challenge will be as a professor?

I suppose the greatest challenge will be to find balance in all of my duties as a law professor, namely, in the areas of teaching, scholarship and university service. The temptation, of course, is to try to do everything and anything since there are so many interesting and exciting things to be done! In this sense, I believe that my training as a mergers and acquisitions attorney will prove helpful in balancing my responsibilities while offering my full attention to matters in which I participate.

What are you most looking forward to as a professor?

Being part of an interesting discussion -- whether in the classroom, with other citizens of the university, or amongst colleagues in the academy. The greatest privilege, I believe, of being a law professor is the ability to engage in a thoughtful and sustained dialogue on matters of great importance to our local and global communities. In a world that is increasingly competitive and interdependent, and particularly at a time when we have witnessed the greatest financial crisis since the Great Depression, there is a pressing need for such dialogue.

What do you hope your students will say about you at the end of the semester/year?

I hope that my students will be able to say that, after taking one of my courses, they better understood the reasons why they take certain positions in the law. While a student myself at Yale, I took a course in imperial history with the late Professor Robin Winks. Those lectures opened my eyes to the comparative approach -- seeing all sides of an issue or event, and then performing a critical analysis in order to more fully appreciate the nature or truth of things. The point of any analytical discipline, I believe, is not simply to have a given political belief or inclination, but to appreciate both the strength and weakness of any argument. And this, of course, is precisely what an attorney engages in as part of the profession.

What do you like to do for fun?

My wife, Tyng, and I have a son, Trevor, who is now an energetic two-year old. When we are not occupied with work and parenting duties (an increasingly seldom occurrence!), we generally like to take things easy and wind down with family and friends. Tyng and I both come from musical backgrounds so we enjoy playing the piano or guitar. Having a companion for these past fifteen years (we were college sweethearts) and now a young son makes for a fulfilled life.