

ADJUNCT BIOS – FALL 2026

Azadian, James (*Appellate Law and Practice*): is a Member in Dykema's Los Angeles and Washington D. C. offices and serves as the co-leader of the firm's nationwide Appellate and Complex Motion Practice. He specializes in complex federal and state court commercial litigation raising cutting-edge and core business issues, the First Amendment to the Constitution, Article I of the California Constitution, and the application of California's anti- SLAPP statute in federal court. He is widely published and frequently cited as a leading authority on appellate advocacy. He served as a law clerk to Ninth Circuit Judge Consuelo Maria Callahan and District Judge Ricardo Manuel Urbina of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. Mr. Azadian serves as an adjunct professor, having taught courses in Appellate Advocacy at Pepperdine University School of Law, Law and Economics at UCLA, the Supreme Court Practicum at Northwestern University School of Law, and Legal Ethics at USC. He is the principal editor and contributing author of the Ninth Circuit's Appellate Lawyers' Practice Guide. The Daily Journal recognized Mr. Azadian as one of the Top 40 Under 40 Attorneys in California. He was also recognized as one of Pepperdine University's inaugural 40 Under 40 Honorees. He is nationally recognized as one of The Best Lawyers in America®.

Bamburg, Seth (*Anti-Human Trafficking Legislation Lab I and Human Trafficking*): joined the Sudreau Global Justice Institute as the Associate Director in 2022. He is a double alumnus of Pepperdine, receiving his B.A. in Political Science from Seaver College summa cum laude in 2014 and his J.D. from Pepperdine Caruso School of Law in 2017. Seth has long partnered with organizations that advance international and domestic justice initiatives and has taught related classes at Pepperdine, including co-teaching the Anti-Human Trafficking Legislation Lab since 2022.

Birch, Stephen (*Role of Law in Real Estate Investment*): is Managing Director of Flying Crown Land Group, a social enterprise dedicated to relieving economic burdens of government in aviation real estate. The organization is a large-scale site developer and currently manages over 10 million square feet of mixed-use commercial office, retail, and hangar space across seven airports. He has taken three companies public in various industries, serves as principal in a venture capital fund, and directly manages highly complex \$200MM+ construction projects requiring federal, state, and local oversight.

Brain, Robert (*Contracts*): has a B.S. in Biology and an M.S. in Biochemistry from Stanford University, and has authored several scientific papers on the effects of light on circadian rhythms. His law degree is from Berkley Law. He began his legal career in the litigation department of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, where he received a pro bono award from the LA County Bar Association for his work with Public Counsel, and represented the ACLU in a case before the United States Supreme Court. He has tried cases on a volunteer basis for the LA District Attorney's Office and has served as a commercial arbitrator for the American Arbitration Association. Professor Brain taught at both Pepperdine University School of Law and McGeorge School of Law before becoming a partner at the litigation firm of Howarth & Smith, where he tried fraud, defamation, securities, products liability, and assault matters, representing diverse clients such as the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Suzuki Motor Corporation, and the victims of 9/11. He joined the faculty of Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, in 2005, where he teaches a variety of courses, including Contracts, Torts, Ethical Lawyering, Sales, Legal Writing, and Videogame Law. He has published articles in evidence, commercial law, jurisprudence, videogame law, and legal communication, and is the author of SUM AND SUBSTANCE OF CONTRACTS, along with two EXAM PRO books on Contracts and West Academic's CD series on Contract law. He is a co-author of COMPUTER AND VIDEOGAME LAW: CASES, STATUTES, FORMS, PROBLEMS & MATERIALS published by Carolina Academic Press, which is the only casebook on videogame law used in American law schools and is the only full-time professor elected to

membership in the Videogame Bar Association and the E-Sports Bar Association. He has been the Chair of the American Association of Law Schools Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research, has served on the Board of the Legal Writing Institute, and is on the Executive Committee, and is President-Elect of the Association of Legal Writing Directors. Professor Brain serves as an affiliate member of the American Bar Association's Council on Legal Education and Admission to the Bar, which sets the accrediting standards for American law schools. He served for four years on California's Committee on Professional Conduct and Conduct, which authors official ethics opinions for the California Bar Association. Professor Brain is a sought-after speaker on commercial and videogame topics, as well as the status of traditionally non-tenure track faculty in the Academy.

Chen, Daniel (*Religious Liberty Clinic*): is Counsel at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. He has litigated cases and obtained precedent-setting victories for his clients in numerous federal courts across the country.

Professor Chen's academic articles have appeared in the Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy Per Curiam and the Court Review: The Journal of the American Judges Association. He often comments on religious liberty issues at law schools in California and around the country.

Prior to joining Becket, Professor Chen was an associate at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, where he worked on commercial litigation in state and federal court. In addition to his experience in private practice, he served as a law clerk to the Honorable Raymond W. Gruender of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit and the Honorable Lucy H. Koh of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. Professor Chen graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law, where he served as a supervising editor on the California Law Review and was elected to the Order of the Coif. Prior to law school, Daniel received his B.A. in Political Science with high distinction from the University of California, Berkeley. He is admitted in Washington, D.C., and California.

Curtis, Joanna (*Trial Practice*): with a career defined by advocacy and sophisticated problem-solving, Pepperdine Alumna Joanna Curtis brings her extensive courtroom, trial, and presentation experience to Pepperdine's Trial Practice course. Joanna currently serves as a mediator, arbitrator, and special master at Signature Resolution. Joanna transitioned to mediating after decades as an accomplished prosecutor, most notably serving for over 15 years as an Assistant United States Attorney for the Central and Southern Districts of California where she held senior leadership positions, including Chief of the Violent Crimes Section and Chief of the General Crimes Section. Joanna represented the United States in hundreds of high-profile criminal matters, including tragic murder cases involving children, an off-duty LAPD officer, TSA officers, and others. Joanna investigated, charged, and prosecuted MS-13 members in sweeping, complex racketeering cases. Joanna began her prosecutorial career at the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office where she served for five years. Throughout her career, Joanna personally tried nearly 70 cases and mentored and supervised dozens more. On behalf of the Department of Justice's National Advocacy Center, Joanna taught trial advocacy to the newest prosecutors. Within the U.S. Attorney's Offices, Joanna taught trial advocacy and substantive criminal law seminars. In addition to managing and mentoring the newest lawyers at the U.S. Attorney's Office, Joanna served as a Pepperdine Preceptor for a decade. Joanna is also an active member of the Los Angeles philanthropic community and serves as a volunteer for Children's Hospital Los Angeles, the American Red Cross, and the Mediation Volunteer Panel of the Los Angeles Superior Court.

Cutting, Curtis (*Ninth Circuit Appellate Advocacy Clinic*): is the co-director of Pepperdine Caruso's Ninth Circuit Appellate Advocacy Clinic and a partner at Los Angeles-based appellate boutique Horvitz & Levy LLP, where he handles civil appeals in a wide range of subject areas, in both state and federal courts. While attending Seattle University School of Law, he served as a legal extern for the Honorable Eugene A. Wright of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth

Circuit. After graduating from law school, Mr. Cutting worked for the Chief Counsel of the Internal Revenue Service, then left that position to serve as a law clerk for the Honorable Ruggero J. Aldisert of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.

Mr. Cutting joined Horvitz & Levy immediately after his clerkship and has remained with the firm for over twenty years. In 2007, Mr. Cutting received an "Attorney of the Year" award from California Lawyer magazine for his work representing the City of San Diego and obtaining reversal of a large civil judgment that threatened to force the city into bankruptcy. He continues to represent individuals, government entities, and corporations against high-stakes litigation. He has particular experience in cases involving punitive damages, and is the primary contributor to the legal blog California Punitive Damages. He has provided commentary on punitive damages litigation for various media outlets, including The National Law Journal, The Seattle Times, The Associated Press, The San Diego Union Tribune, The Daily Journal, The Recorder, BNA's Class Action Litigation Reporter, and Business Insurance. He received his B.S. (Physics) and A.B (History), Ohio University, 1992, cum laude, and his J.D., Seattle University School of Law, 1995, magnum cum laude.

Davidson, Jane (*Trademarks, Unfair Competition, and Unfair Trade Practices*): is an entertainment litigation associate at Nolan Heimann LLP. For the past seven years, she has litigated copyright, trademark, defamation, and contract disputes. Her clients primarily include musicians, screenwriters, actors, talent managers, and other industry professionals. She has been recognized by both Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch® in America in Commercial Litigation and Entertainment & Sports Law and Super Lawyers Rising Stars. She received her B.S. in Music Industry from University of Southern California and her J.D. from Loyola Law School. She also teaches Music Law at USC and Entertainment Law at Loyola Law School.

Doniger, Stephen (*Intellectual Property Survey*): is a partner at a boutique law firm that handles both transactional and litigation matters for clients in a variety of industries. His primary focus is copyright litigation, but he is a broadly accomplished intellectual property and business law practitioner who has successfully argued before a variety of state and federal courts, making new law on multiple occasions. He has been designated a California Super Lawyer for the years 2021-2026, and in 2023 received the California Lawyers Association IP Law Section Vanguard Award which “honors outstanding legal professionals... for their contributions to the advancement of intellectual property law.” In addition to his private practice, he currently sits on the Executive Committee of the CLA IP Law Section, serves as advisory counsel for American Photographic Artists, works with a coalition of trade groups to write amicus briefs and advance artist rights through legislative and other avenues, and teaches at UCLA.

Elishis, Yona (*Faith and Family Law Mediation Clinic*): joined Pepperdine Law School as an Adjunct Clinical Professor of Law in 2018, where she serves as a mediator in the Faith and Family Mediation clinic.

Professor Elishis has been with the Jewish Divorce Assistance Center of Los Angeles (JDAC) as a mediation consultant since 2015. JDAC functions as a non-profit organization that provides pro-bono services to individuals and couples navigating dual civil and religious process of divorce, with the goal of finding amicable, timely and cost-efficient resolutions. Students in Pepperdine’s Faith and Family Mediation clinic work in the field with JDAC to complete their requirements.

Professor Elishis obtained her law degree in 2004 from Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto and completed her final year of schooling in New York City at Columbia Law School. Professor Elishis went on to obtain her Masters in Law (LL.M) from NYU Law School with a focus on Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution. Professor Elishis practiced family law at the firm of McCarthy Tetrault in Toronto where she trained with many of Canada’s highest-profile divorce attorneys and worked diligently to help families resolve their legal disputes effectively and

equitably. Prior to this, Professor Elishis practiced corporate law at the firm Paul Weiss in New York City. In addition to her work at JDAC, Professor Elishis has started several creative venture's including a successful children's clothing business where she is able to channel her artistic energies. She is also involved in various community projects and boards and most importantly raising her five children.

Gagliano, Steve (*Entertainment Law Seminar–Special Problems in the Music Industry*): is Vice President of Business & Legal Affairs at Sony Music Publishing, where he serves as in-house counsel for its production music library (Extreme Music) and its custom scoring division (Bleeding Fingers Music). He manages a legal team handling all commissioning, publishing, and distribution agreements, as well as general licenses and global sub-publishing matters. He also regularly negotiates asset and stock purchase agreements, having led numerous catalog acquisitions on the buy-side. Prior to Sony, he was an attorney at LaPolt Law, P.C., a boutique music firm specializing in talent-side representation. Steve earned his J.D. from Pepperdine Caruso School of Law in 2017, where he served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship, and the Law* and received certificates in entertainment, entrepreneurship and dispute resolution. He received his B.S. in Music Industry and his B.A. in Political Science from the University of Southern California in 2012. He is admitted to practice in California and Tennessee.

Kublicki, Nicolas (*Real Estate Transactions*): is an LA native who obtained his BA from UCLA, his JD from Pepperdine, and his LLM in environmental law from George Washington University. He worked in the policy and environmental departments at the Department of Justice in Washington, DC then practiced real estate finance at Buchalter, Nemer, Fields & Younger in LA and real estate transactions and environmental law at Ervin, Cohen & Jessup in Beverly Hills, from which he retired as a partner. Nicolas is a licensed California real estate broker and owns a real estate investment company that both owns and operates

condominium, single-family, and multifamily residential rental properties. He is fluent in French, actively involved in charitable activities for the poor and sick, and has published two thriller novels. Nicolas is married with two daughters.

Miller, John (*Employment Law*): John Miller joined Sony Pictures Entertainment in 2004 as Vice-President, Legal Affairs. At SPE, Mr. Miller provides legal, strategic, and business-oriented advice regarding employee relations, compliance, investigations and all issues relating to employment law concerns, including claims for discrimination and harassment, wage and hour, pay equity, performance management, hiring/termination, leaves of absence, and accommodations. He also partners closely with human resources to devise, update, and implement employment policies and draft and negotiate executive employment contracts. His responsibilities also include preparing responses to government agency claims including the EEOC, California Civil Rights Department and California Labor Commissioner; facilitating harassment and discrimination training to SPE executives and to productions, including separate trainings for cast, writers and crew; and advises business units, including television productions, animation, visual effects and Sony Pictures Television on compliance with all aspects of California employment law. Prior to joining SPE, Mr. Miller was a lawyer at the Los Angeles office of Sonnenschein, Nath & Rosenthal (Now Dentons) responsible for all areas of employment and complex business litigation on behalf of Fortune 100 companies. He earned his J.D. from Loyola Law School and B.A. from UCLA.

Nissel, Sarah (*Faith and Family Law Mediation Clinic*): serves as the Director of the Faith and Family Mediation Clinic and Adjunct Clinical Professor of Law. She is the Executive Director of the Jewish Divorce Assistance Center of Los Angeles (JDAC), a nonprofit organization that provides pro-bono services to individuals and couples navigating dual civil and religious processes of divorce. Prior to joining JDAC, Professor Nissel worked in the areas of white-collar criminal defense and

complex civil litigation at Bird, Marella, *et al.*, a Los Angeles based litigation boutique firm, and Morvillo, Abramowitz, *et al.*, a boutique litigation firm in New York City. Professor Nissel has served as a fellow at the Innocence Project, where she gained experience working on criminal proceedings at the state level. Professor Nissel graduated with honors from Yale University in 2003, where she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Comparative Literature. She received her J.D. from New York University School of Law in 2008, where she was a Dean's Scholar. Her research focuses on mediation, family law, and law and religion.

Palyan, Tigran (*Family Law*): is a founding partner of Storm Palyan LLP. He is a Certified Family Law Specialist and practices family law exclusively.

Tigran is committed to raising the level of professionalism in family law, as well as promoting access to justice. He has served on the Executive Committee of the Family Law Section of the Los Angeles County Bar Association (FLEXCOM) since 2013 and currently serves as Chair Elect. He has chaired and co-chaired numerous committees, including pro-bono initiatives in partnership with the Los Angeles Superior Court, including the Trial Readiness Clinics, and more recently, the Judgment Assistance Day Program with the Los Angeles Superior Court. Tigran also served on the Board of Governors for the Armenian Bar Association, the Board of Directors for Levitt Quinn, as well as the Glendale Memorial Health Foundation.

Tigran graduated *cum laude* from the University of California, San Diego with a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and a minor in Political Theory. He received his J.D., graduating *cum laude* from Southwestern Law School in 2009. Tigran graduated in the top ten percent of his class, served both on law review and moot court, and earned the highest grade in several classes throughout law school. Additionally, he completed multiple full-time judicial externships, including a clerkship with the Honorable Arthur Alarcón with the Ninth Circuit United States Court of Appeals. After law school, before joining the private practice, Tigran served as a judicial law clerk/research attorney for the Stanley Mosk Court. He served the unlimited civil departments, the department of writs and receiverships, and then exclusively for five family law departments, including two judicial officers who went on to become the Supervising Judge for Family Law in Los Angeles County. As a research attorney, Tigran researched and recommended rulings in hundreds of family law proceedings.

Prior to founding Storm Palyan LLP, Tigran ran his family law practice at Palyan Law APC, and before that, was an associate attorney at Trope and Trope LLP. Tigran is a graduate of the National Family Law Trial Institute in Houston, Texas, and has taught as Adjunct Professor of Law at Southwestern Law School since 2013. He currently teaches Family Law at Pepperdine University's Caruso School of Law, as well as Family Law Practice and Procedure, and Small Firm Practice Management at Southwestern Law School. Tigran has been published and cited numerous times, including a law review article he authored on privacy that has been cited in the Journal of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML) among numerous other publications, and is responsible for introducing "a reasonable avatar standard" in applying privacy tort laws to virtual worlds. Tigran is recognized as a "Super Lawyer" by Southern California Super Lawyers. In 2019, Tigran received the Top 20 under 40 Rising Stars award by the Armenian Bar Association. In 2022, Tigran was recognized by the Daily Journal as one of the twenty top family law attorneys across California, as published in its February 16, 2022 edition. He was recognized by the Daily Journal again thereafter, including in 2025, as a top family law attorney.

Powell, Rebecca (*Ninth Circuit Appellate Advocacy Clinic*): is the co-director of Pepperdine's Ninth Circuit Appellate Advocacy Clinic and an attorney at Horvitz & Levy LLP, a Los Angeles-based appellate boutique. Becca handles civil appeals in a wide range of subject areas in both state and federal courts. She also maintains an active pro bono practice in addition to clinic cases. During law school, Rebecca externed for three appellate judges on the Utah Supreme Court and Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals. After law school, she clerked for Justice Thomas R. Lee on the Utah Supreme Court, and then moved to the Los Angeles area to clerk for Judge Milan D. Smith, Jr. on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Her clerkships solidified her interest in practicing appellate law, and she joined Horvitz & Levy a few years later in 2020. Becca is licensed in California and Utah. Brigham Young University, J. Reuben Clark Law School J.D., Lead Articles Editor, BYU Law Review. Graduated *summa cum laude*, Order of the Coif, 2013. University of Utah, B.A., 2010.

Rassbach, Eric (*Religious Liberty Clinic*): is Vice President & Senior Counsel at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty where he has served since 2003. He has led or been a part of Becket litigation teams in each of Becket's path breaking victories at

the United States Supreme Court, including *Hosanna-Tabor*, *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, *Holt v. Hobbs*, *Zubik v. Burwell*, *Fulton v. Philadelphia* and *Our Lady of Guadalupe School v. Morrissey-Berru*. Professor Rassbach frequently comments on church-state issues in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and other major press outlets. His academic articles have appeared in numerous journals, including the *Tennessee Law Review*, the *Illinois Law Review*, the *Cato Supreme Court Review*. He is a graduate of Harvard Law School, served as a law clerk to United States District Court Judge Lee Rosenthal in Houston, Texas, and, prior to joining Becket, worked at Baker Botts LLP.

Richmond, John Cotton (*Human Rights: Human Trafficking*): is a partner in Dentons' Federal Regulatory and Compliance practice. Previously, John served as the US Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons for the US Department of State. John's career has been spent at the intersection of law, policy and human rights -- as a federal prosecutor, founding director of the Human Trafficking Institute, director of the International Justice Mission in Chennai, India, and as Ambassador. John's career has taken him to the front lines in the global battle against human trafficking. After being unanimously confirmed by the Senate, he served as the US Ambassador to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons from 2018 to 2021. Serving in the nation's highest-ranking position dedicated to human trafficking, he led US foreign policy related to modern slavery and coordinated the US government's response to the crime.

Prior to his appointment as Ambassador, John co-founded the Human Trafficking Institute which works to decimate trafficking at its source by improving criminal justice systems to hold traffickers accountable and ensure freedom for victims. For over a decade, John served as a federal prosecutor with the US Department of Justice's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit, where he prosecuted numerous victim-centered labor and sex trafficking cases. John also lived in India for several years pioneering International Justice Mission's slavery work. During this period he spent time in over fifty countries for work, developing an understanding of various countries' legal systems, government structures, and bureaucratic processes. John applies this unique understanding to investigations, lawsuits, and diplomatic disputes to achieve measurable results. John has received numerous honors and commendations, including having been named a "Prosecutor of the

Year” and receiving the David Alred Award for exceptional contributions to civil rights. His work caused the former head of the FBI’s human trafficking program to call him “every trafficker’s worst nightmare.”

Sood, Gautham (*Evidence*): For nearly a decade, he has served as a Deputy District Attorney in Orange County, California, where he prosecuted an array of felony conduct and tried over 70 bench and jury trials. Professor Sood completed his tenure as a member of the elite Special Prosecutions Unit, where he handled sensitive and high-profile cases, including officer and attorney misconduct, political corruption, and arson.

After leaving the DA’s office in 2017, he explored a wide variety of interests in the law, business, and academia. Professor Sood earned his MBA from UCLA Anderson School of Management with individual and departmental honors in 2020. Professor Sood then served as a fellow and post-doctoral scholar in UCLA Anderson’s office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, where he developed and delivered inclusive skill-building workshops to all incoming students.

In recent years, Professor Sood has enjoyed coaching Pepperdine’s Trial Advocacy Team and serving as an adjunct professor at Chapman Law School, where he teaches Contract Drafting and Negotiations. When he’s not teaching, he serves as a corporate advisor to early-stage startups, develops real estate, and consults with government and private organizations on DEI issues.

In his free time, Professor Sood enjoys international travel, mentoring students of all ages, all forms of artistic expression, and spending time with his wife, Amanda, and their 3-year-old daughter, Serena.

Wu, Sam (*Startup Law Clinic*): received his Juris Doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley School of Law (Boalt Hall). After law school, Professor Wu joined the Corporate and Securities Group of Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati in Palo Alto. In 2010, he co-founded Innovation Capital Law Group, specializing in working with technology startups, and is currently the lead partner for the Corporate and Securities Group of the firm. He has represented companies with

over \$5 billion in seed financings, angel investments, venture capital financings, joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, and initial public offerings. He is an experienced startup attorney representing technology and emerging growth companies involving corporate formation, corporate governance, corporate financings (venture capital and angel financings), mergers and acquisitions, licensing transactions, and initial public offerings. Professor Wu is the founder and author of www.TechStartupLawyer.com, a blog answering the most important questions technology startups should be asking.