

Q&A > department

Anthony Niedwiecki

Age: 44.

Family: He and his husband, Waymon Hudson, have been married for three years.

Education: He earned his undergraduate degree in mathematics from Wayne State University in 1989, his law degree from Tulane Law School in 1995 and his LLM from Temple University Beasley School of Law in 2000.

Profession: He practiced at Mayer Brown in Houston and Gardere & Wynne in Dallas before starting his academic career as a lecturer at Temple University in 1998. He also taught at Arizona State University and Nova Southeastern University's Shepard Broad Law Center. He came to The John Marshall Law School in 2010 where he teaches lawyering skills, employment law, labor law and commercial law.

1. Why did you become a lawyer?

I was a schoolteacher and then I went to law school because I wanted to be a politician at some point and I thought that was a good step toward that goal. I was vice mayor of my city before I moved here — Oakland Park, Fla.

2. What is the last class that you taught?

The last class that I taught was "Law and Sexual Orientation" over the last four or five weeks where we covered a lot of the current issues and focused a lot on marriage equality, civil unions here in Illinois and a wide range of issues like family law, the changes in sodomy laws and constitutional issues. The course really focused in on the history of gay rights legislation and court battles.

3. What is the strangest thing that's happened to you as a lawyer or professor?

It may not be the strangest but it did make me feel a little old. It is the fact that going to law professor conferences and meeting former students there who are now law professors. It brings satisfaction but it also brings in the reality that I've been doing this for almost 14 years. They still call me Professor Niedwiecki and we have to change that. ...

4. If you could have lunch with anyone, living or dead, who would it be and why?

Hillary Clinton.

The reason is she's had such a wide range of political, personal and legal experiences. I think it would just be a really interesting con-



Photo by David Durochik

versation to have. Right now we would talk about current issues she's dealing with internationally. I would be very curious to learn her role in what's going on in the Middle East. And then what are some of her future goals. And, of course, I would want a little bit of juicy gossip about her past.

5. What's your advice for future lawyers?

Develop a strong work ethic and good professionalism in law school because the habits you develop in law school will carry through in your practice. We need people who are civil, smart and ethical.

6. What do you like the most and the least about being a lawyer and professor?

What I like the most about being a law professor, especially, is that I really get people at a very early stage in their career and get to mold them. I get them to appreciate the opportunities that being a lawyer allows, but also the responsibilities that go along with it.

The thing I least like about being a lawyer is really kind of just how the nature of law can be adversarial and that sometimes brings out the worst in people. What I like most about being a lawyer, in general, is your ability to understand issues, be involved more politically and really make a bigger difference in society.

The thing that may bother me most about being a law professor is sometimes colleagues complain that students do certain things, but

then turn around and do the same thing. Being a law professor is probably the best job anybody can ever have. I know very few people in my life who wake up in the morning and think, "I like going to work." But I do.

7. What's your favorite childhood vacation?

I loved going to Cedar Point. I love roller coasters, just the thrill of it all. We used to do that at least once a summer. Growing up [my favorite roller coaster] was the Gemini. ... It was a double roller coaster. There would be two cars that go at the same time. ...

8. What is the most important thing going on in the legal world today?

I think there is a domino effect with the economy forcing law firms to be more efficient, do more with less, which is then requiring law schools to rethink their approach to teaching law students. As the director of the lawyering skills program here it presents a really good opportunity for me to come to a school that is practice oriented and really rethink the curriculum here to make sure it's responsive to the changing market. ...

9. What's your favorite Chicago restaurant?

... I love Frontera Grill. I'm a big fan of Mexican food, but upscale interesting takes on Mexican food are even more exciting and I'm also a big "Top Chef" fan. ■

By Olivia Clarke