

Study groups.mp3

Zeb: [00:00:01] Hey, guys, my name is Zeb, I'm a rising 2L here at Syracuse Law, and I'm here with Carlos.

Carlos: [00:00:08] Good afternoon, everybody, or good evening or good morning, depending on where you're joining us from and what time. Like I've said, my name is Carlos Negron. I'm a rising 2L. We're both excited to be here with you. How are you today Zeb?

Zeb: [00:00:29] I'm good. I'm good. I mean, look, today is a pretty big topic. How to find a study group. This is a very technical thing. It's almost art and there are different ways to go to go about it. And, you know, we're just going to try to make sure that you guys get all of the best ways to go about this, because I think this is a common pitfall where if this is done the wrong way, it can ruin a whole semester. I guess the best place to start would be, you know, the best place to find one. And I think a place is actually with the academic success group every semester. You'll an academic success group and you guys meet about once a week and you have mentors and you're there with other law students. That group that's there, those guys are there. You're there answering questions with those guys and girls. And you never know sometimes that those people may end up being a great study group for you since you already meet once a week anyway.

Carlos: [00:01:27] Definitely. It can be kind of challenging every time you start a class. You're basically coming in cold. You don't know anybody. And at those academic success meetings, at least you have some familiarity. You know the people there and some of them might be in your class. There's something else similar called Salt Mentors. They don't really create hypos and discuss the class as much. they help you with other areas of law school. But you will also have classmates there with you. Another place where I have found a lot of success finding study partners is in class. Every now and then the professor will ask a student something that I think might be very challenging and they just blow the professor out of the water. And over time, week after week you'll see that certain students are performing well in class. You kind of start to size them up and see, oh, wow, this is somebody who's really serious about class or this is somebody who looks at issues in a very particular way that I think could be beneficial

to my studying. And you kind of find these like minded individuals. And then after that, it's just about having the courage after class to tell them, hey, I liked what you said. I thought that was a really good point. Would you be interested in getting together after class or before you study?

Zeb: [00:02:47] Yeah, I guess another place also, which you may not really think of and a lot of people don't think about is when you come in, there are a lot of clubs and these people you're meeting in different kinds of settings and you may see somebody in one of your clubs who's also in a similar class as you. And listen, have that conversation. You never know what you might get from that conversation. You never know that one person might end up being your study partner or be a part of your study group for the rest of your time here. I know for me personally, I've always seen that there's also a lot of great power in one off conversations. There are some people who I didn't necessarily study with all the time, but there's definitely some conversations we had. I asked about a certain topic and they explained to me in a way which made sense. We didn't become a study group, but I know that they actually helped out a lot. There's a lot of different ways to go to go about it. You're going to be here. You're going to have friends. But study group and friend group, you know, those are those are those are not the same thing.

Carlos: [00:03:55] It can get confusing because you come into school on your own. You meet a lot of nice, friendly people from all over the country. And you are going to be drawn to them and try to be friends with them. But that's probably not the best strategy for finding a study group. It could also be something simple like a text chat. Right. Like you have a group chat with people or something like a zoom study group if you can't meet online.

Zeb: [00:04:26] Oh, for sure. So some people. You're going to be in GROUP CHATS, that's inevitable. That's just that's just a part of society that we that we've come to. You just never know. You might find yourselves in a group that maybe most of the time you're talking about nothing. You're joking around. Maybe you ask SOME QUESTIONS and stuff come up. Zoom is one way. But I think for me, Zoom really can't be used at the MACRO level. So it's hard on zoom to having to replicate exactly what's happening in person. But Zoom could be used for SMALL TOPICS. So let's say that collectively you guys are struggling with one topic, a SPECIFIC topic that your professor may be taught

over the course of two different lectures. Zoom is great because you can go, hey, let's meet tonight at this time. Let's talk about this. And that way, **Zoom is really isn't being used to replicate a room, right. It's just being used to have an OPEN discussion, essentially bringing you together a specific topic and then you get off.** Yeah. And I think that sometimes that meeting may last 15 minutes in the last 20 minutes, MAYBE last 30. But because you're fleshing out one topic, it's a lot more focused and it's a lot more it's a lot more strategic. And you normally get like a big benefit from it. And I guess when it comes to that, that would mean that certain aspects of this could be formal. Certain aspects could also be informal. I did mention group chats, which are very INFORMAL because you're shooting a text, somebody to tell you about what you learned in today or you got called about something, you wrote it down. You should have you took a screenshot of a note you took and now the group chat is kind of discussing it. That's super informal. Or the group could be formal. Hey, let's meet in DINEEN hall in this room at this time. Bring your books. Now we know why we're there so you can kind of go about it both ways.

Carlos: [00:06:15] Yeah. And I think the most important thing, whether you're going to have a formal study group or an informal study group, is that you need to be able to bring something to the study group. Yeah, you can't go in there cold. So people always ask me, should I self study before? Should I self study for this class or should I group study for this? And the answer is you can't get away from self study in law school. Your group, no matter how great it is, they can't take the test for you. you don't need to understand the whole class before showing up to a group study session, but you need to be able to bring in something to the table. You can't just go in there blind.

Zeb: [00:06:56] Yeah, for sure. Listen, self studying COMES FIRST. You can't not self study in in law. In law school. Right. So self study comes first, then you're in, you're in the group, you do your thing, you then SELF STUDY AGAIN. Yeah. These moments where you're alone and you get a chance to SELF REFLECT and really think about what you went over in class which went over in the actual group are big because you have to REINFORCE the stuff you learned in the group. You might have discussed maybe the most important topic in class if you had no point. Take the time to go and look at yourself. Go and confirm some of what you learn. You can't leave, assuming that everything the group in the group was perfect, right? Go and CONFIRM with the notes. Maybe after that you might want to go ask the professor something. That level of

reinforcement is really what leads to success, seeing the same topic multiple times. So now you've seen it when you PRE READ, you saw it in CLASS, you saw it when you self studied AFTER CLASS. You start IN THE GROUP study, then you reviewed AFTER the group setting that's FIVE different times.

Carlos: [00:07:59] It's continuous.

Zeb: [00:08:00] You keep seeing it now. You see the same thing five different times. If you THEN MEET with the professor, that's SIX different times. You mean with academic success? That's SEVEN different times at this point. At the very least, you understand the topic. Now, that next phase of figuring out the hypos, which we're going to talk about some other point is easier because at least you understand the topic.

Carlos: [00:08:20] And I have some professors who are really kind and they were like, if you guys want to bring yourself or study group to our office sessions, they'll do that. And that's kind of one of the pros. One of the things that I really like about group study is that if you're feeling kind of intimidated about going directly to the professor, you can bring your whole study group to the professor. I would ask the professor first, but most of them would be OK with it in my experience. And that can be one of the benefits. Which kind of brings us to our next topic. Right. What are the pros of self study versus the pros of study group? And I think the pros of study group, we discussed this off the air. I really enjoy study group, which one of the pros that I like is that there's somebody there to hold you accountable. If it was up to me, I might not study for this class until next week. But if I have a study group session scheduled for tomorrow, I can't do that.

Carlos: [00:09:16] I have to study tonight so that I'm ready for my study group tomorrow. It's a way that my study group hold me accountable. And also when I'm in the study group, you will have people in there that tells you, no, I don't think that's right or you need to review this. it's a way that you're kind of helping each other along it. People bring different ideas and different perspectives, and sometimes that helps you understand things in a different way that you might not have thought of before. I also find that group study kind of makes time a little bit more bearable. when I'm studying by myself It feels like I've been studying for 10 weeks and the time kind of gets away from me. Again, with group study, you kind of get to back off a little bit. It's a little bit more

conversational and I think it makes time go quicker. What are your feelings about self studying? I know you particularly enjoy that.

Zeb: [00:10:12] So I personally like self study because I don't have to accommodate anybody. There's no scheduling issues. I don't need to know your schedule, what clubs you're in, when you going get a haircut, when you eat dinner, you're doing this. And that's big for me because the convenience of self study means the only person I have to worry about is actually me. Yeah. And then also I get to focus on areas of difficulty. to me in a group setting, I may find something extremely difficult and everybody gets it already, that's a waste of everybody else's time.

Carlos: [00:10:44] It'll be hard to make that conversation. Yeah.

Zeb: [00:10:46] Yeah. So for me it's like the scheduling me getting a chance to focus and listen. We all know and as probably everybody who's been education has seen, everybody learns things at a different rate. Something might take me an hour, which might take Carlos ten minutes. So if it's an area of difficulty, which for some reason I'm just not grasping, I may really want to sit there and flesh it out, watch YouTube videos, watch this, really try to get it right for a couple hours. Wasn't that probably isn't worth a couple hours. Somebody else maybe for me that's so stressful for me. Maybe I'm just not grabbing, but I need the time, which is why I self study is important because I can spend as much time on a certain thing as I need to. Now, this isn't really a self study session. This is about group studying. We know theres good and bad group study strategies. So, Carlos, I mean, you can talk about the good ones. I want to be the bad guy. OK, so you talk about the good.

Carlos: [00:11:41] I'll talk about the good. I think some good group study strategies are if you have questions and a specific topic, if you have issues with a part of the class, bring those questions to the study group. be ready. Don't just come in there unprepared. Kind of just like, oh, I hope they talk about negligent study in the group study or. Oh, man, I really hope we get to mens rea. No, no, no. If you want to talk about mens rea, I'll be ready and have some direct questions. Right. Don't tell your study group partners Hey, can you teach me mens rea. No, no, no. What part of mens rea do you have an issue with? Bring well-formed questions. I've always been a big advocate about getting from a study group as much as you put in. So you have a study group schedule that

you're going to meet with. You should try and bring hypos, bring your outlines, bring your notes, bring resources. You don't want to be the guy that's in the room and just lost and trying to recall everything in your head because it's a lot of law to keep in your head. So you want to be prepared, bring your hypos, even if that means sometimes I have to make a couple of trips to my locker to get everything that I need.

Carlos: [00:12:51] I'm there. I'm on time and I'm ready. group study is as beneficial as you are consistent. You want to meet with people if you have like a scheduled group study, hey, I'm going to be there at this time, like show up. Don't just try to find a reason not to go consistent, be consistent with it. And that might mean different things for different people. Some groups do weekly. Some people might meet monthly, some people might meet sporadically, because like you said, it can be an issue of scheduling. I know I have one study group that I found a lot of success with that we would meet two weeks before there was a big event. So if there was a midterm two weeks before the midterm, that's when we would start scheduling study group sessions.

Carlos: [00:13:45] If there was a final two weeks before the final, that's when we would start scheduling study group sessions. And I think that can be a good group strategy. I had some great group partners that they brought resources to the study group sessions like I had a friend who she always brought whiteboard. So no matter where we chose to meet we weren't beholden to finding a room in the law school because wherever we went, she would have whiteboards ready, whether that was at her apartment or mine or somebody else's, she would have those resources ready. I had another friend who always brought Marker's because if we did choose to meet in the law school, you're going to find that sometimes there's no whiteboard marker. So if you want to be a good study partner, try to bring some resources. And that can be aids, hypos, it can be your outline, or your notes. that can be something that the professor just sent out and you just so happen to be in the library. You printed it and brought it to the study group. But you tell me Zeb, what are some bad group studies?

Zeb: [00:14:44] You just mentioned you guys are meeting two weeks before a big event. That means you guys had a plan. That's the first thing. If you don't have a plan, you're stuck

Carlos: [00:14:57] Yeah, you're doing it right.

Zeb: [00:14:58] I'm trying to use clean language. You are finished. If you don't have a plan, you're just wasting time. And TIME IS LIMITED. And those study sessions would just go to be a waste. And also, look, I'm going to keep harping on this self study thing. If you haven't done the work YOURSELF, you coming into the group is just going to be confusing for you. It's not super productive and it's not really going to help you in those in those moments because, you know, group study sessions are can be some mix between a review and like just a quick conversation about something. And if you have specific questions, you mentioned the whole and the whole mens rea thing, which you guys are going to hear.. You guys dont about that. You worry about it. But there are different elements. You know, let's let's imagine that the topic is a CAR. You can't come to groups and say, hey, guys, I'm confused about a car. You need to be specific. Hey, I'm confused about changing a tire. I understand everything else. I'm confused about the tire part. Something doesn't really sit right with me about how to use this tool or this tool. Do I have to elevate the car? What do I do if I'm in the middle of the street? Where are you from? In the suburbs. In the city. So be specific. And that's why self study helps because you won't know that you're confused about a tire and not the whole car unless you did a deep dive.

Carlos: [00:16:13] You say you need to find it. Yeah.

Zeb: [00:16:16] You come down now you're spending minutes, hours talking about a car when in reality you understand most of the car. You're just missing that small piece about the tires. Now it all comes together for you. Also, just really getting a chance to come in and NOT ASSESSING if the groups, even FOR YOU, just because you guys meet for a certain amount of hours doesn't mean what you're doing is ACTUALLY EFFECTIVE.

Carlos: [00:16:38] Yeah, you need to find what's working.

Zeb: [00:16:40] Think about it like really sit after your group study sessions. Did I really accomplish something today that I really need to be here, that I learned something new? Did we just talk about nothing for most of time? Did we meet for 4 hours? And for three of those hours we were watching a game, you know? I mean, like, these are the small things we have to like really to really think about. And then, you know, they're

traps, right? They're big traps of study groups. And I would say one of the big ones is, you know, time we've been here for hours. We didn't accomplish any anything. The one thing

Carlos: [00:17:14] You don't have a lot of

Zeb: [00:17:15] In law school. Yeah. And you can't buy back in like you can't. So this time, right. We've been here and maybe we had our books open. Maybe we talked about things here and there. You might be there for hours. But if it wasn't an effective four hours, you've now wasted four hours. And in your mind, you might want to lie to yourself and say, I....

Carlos: [00:17:32] Studied for four hours.

Zeb: [00:17:33] You didn't really study for four hours. And the second one is picking friends. Listen. Some friends are probably going to be great additions to a study group and some friend groups are going to be end up being great study groups. Listen, no one's arguing that, but the truth is not every study group is built around friendship. Right? You don't need to be so buddy, buddy, with all of the study groups that you're actually in, because sometimes you guys may be so close and so informal that it just doesn't work in the studying setting. And maybe if your group of friends all have DIFFERENT study habits, forming a study group actually doesn't help because one friend likes to study with music on the other, one likes to pace. The other friend likes to watch videos. The other friend likes to read. One friend is conversational, the other friends, not introvert, extrovert. Is that so many different FACTORS that make groups effective, that will make study groups ineffective. So really think about think really think about that. Yeah.

Carlos: [00:18:33] A little friction can be good too. Yeah. If you have a study group with somebody who's not your friend and somebody who is maybe a little bit more vocal and more serious about some things like that can be good for the whole group.

Zeb: [00:18:44] For sure. For sure. Especially if it's done the right way. I'm not saying that you should agree on all things. I am saying that if your goal is to look at your friend

group and say, this is my study, you, that's not how that works, right? That's not how that works.

Carlos: [00:18:57] The opposite could happen. Yes. You can meet people from Study Group and they end up becoming really close friends.

Zeb: [00:19:03] Yes, that can happen for sure. Now, you, Carlos, had a small caveat that you did not want to finish this without saying, which was a very, I guess, word a word to the wise, to the students listening to this.

Carlos: [00:19:18] Is just a little reminder is about culture and it's easy to forget that the road to law school was very competitive. We all had to get a certain score on the LSAT to get here. We all needed to get a certain GPA to get here. We got accepted into the school because some people got denied. And it kind of breeds this culture of ultra-competitiveness. And you might see it in aspects of law school with our ranking and with our curve and things like that. Law school can be a great place. It can be a bad place if you make it bad. And I think we need to be very careful about letting the ultra competitiveness define the experience. It doesn't really give you an edge in study groups. You don't want to go into a study group to fight and play defense. And it's OK to have disagreements and talk them through. And like you said, you know, people might look at things a different way and that benefits you, but you don't want to make it negative. And if you do things the right way in law school, you might meet some of the greatest people you have ever met in your life. I know that has been my experience. You might become great friends with some great people. You need to be able to work in a team. When you're in a group study, you put in as much as you take out. If you're getting something from the group, you need to also bring something to them. It's not a place to be competitive. I know that the people in my study groups in the past, there are people that have my best interests at heart and they want me to do well and I want them to do well.

Zeb: [00:20:56] Because remember another thing, this competition thing is real, which is why I studies important. Just because it's said in study group doesn't make it true. Yeah. And their horror stories of people being misled in certain groups in order to, you know, just work their own angles

Carlos: [00:21:15] Its not the place to be competitive. And if you're that type of person, maybe group study is not for you. Maybe self studying is the best way. And there I can be competitive, too sometimes, but I get a lot out of group studies. Do you have anything else you want to talk about, Zeb? I think we've told them as much as we can about group study.

Zeb: [00:21:38] Listen, if we I mean, we can talk about this for days, but I don't have the time. You don't have the time. And they certainly don't have the time to have a lot more to worry about. But I would say this has been fun. There's probably a lot more information here. They're going to see us around campus.

Carlos: [00:21:54] Yeah. For sure. It's all part of the experience.

Zeb: [00:21:57] Experience. Yeah. But, you know, I think this episode went really well. And hopefully, you know, you guys tune in and join us for the next one, which is actually going to be about HYPOS, which is also an integral part of studying in general.

Carlos: [00:22:10] So that's going to be a great conversation.

Zeb: [00:22:12] Oh, for sure. So listen, I'm signing off and hope hopefully you guys join us for the next one.