Welcome to Fordham Law School! We are eagerly looking forward to meeting you and to being part of the beginning of your legal education.

During the weeks of August 15 and August 22, all incoming JD candidates will take Quantitative Methods for Lawyers (QM). In this class, we will consider the legal problems that the pharmaceuticals manufacturer Merck & Company faced due to its sales of Vioxx, a prescription pain medicine that allegedly caused heart attacks and strokes. We will look at Merck’s legal problems through a series of analytical frameworks that lawyers, judges, lawmakers, and regulators find useful in evaluating legal problems. Those frameworks are supply and demand analysis, cost-benefit analysis, the time value of money and risk assessment, and accounting principles and financial statements. What these frameworks have in common is that they make use of numbers: dollars and cents, as well as percentages, discount rates, and probabilities.

We realize that students come to law school with different levels of familiarity with basic quantitative methods. Our goal in the class is to make sure that everyone – regardless of college major and previous work experience – has the same, basic level of exposure to these methods when starting regular 1L classes. So don’t worry – you won’t be at a disadvantage in the course, no matter whether your college major was economics or French literature.

The assigned reading for the course is a packet that consists of news stories about Merck’s experience with Vioxx, plus questions to consider for class discussion. Read the packet before the first class meeting. The news stories cover events such as the Food and Drug Administration’s approval of Vioxx, the product recall when studies suggested a risk of heart attacks, the thousands of Vioxx lawsuits, and finally, the massive settlement of litigation and its impact on Merck. Alas, reading these articles will not make you an expert in pharmaceuticals or products-liability law. But it will acquaint you with a storyline that we will reference in class as we discuss how quantitative methods can be used to analyze legal questions.

QM is graded pass/fail. To receive credit, you must attend class and you must complete two online assessments, plus an online course evaluation. To access the reading packet, you must complete the preliminary assessment, which you can find by directing your browser to http://law.fordham.edu/firstyearjdorientation. We will use the preliminary assessment to gauge how much exposure incoming Fordham students have to quantitative methods. Fill it out on your own, without doing any research or consulting with others. It consists of thirteen multiple-choice questions and should only take about 15 minutes. And don’t worry if you don’t know the answers: you pass the course by completing the assessments, not by getting all (or any!) of the questions right. But you must answer all the questions to pass.

At the end of the course, you will be required to complete a second, thirteen-question assessment, which you will be able to access on Friday, August 26th from 10:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. Complete it that day by directing your browser to http://law.fordham.edu/firstyearjdorientation. Once again, do not work with others when completing this quiz. Just answer the questions as best you can, drawing on what you learned in QM.

Once again, welcome to Fordham Law School. We look forward to seeing you in class.