Leading a world-class field

Jackson teaches three-day marathon course on international trade, economic relations

When John H. Jackson talks about international trade, the experts listen. The Hessel E. Yntema Professor of Law at the University of Michigan is frequently called upon by Congress, the administrative departments of the federal government, and the private sector for his advice and expertise. Late last year, more than 50 practitioners and government officials, including a group from Canada, gathered at the Aspen Institute’s Wye Plantation, in Queensland, MD, for an intensive three-day course taught by Jackson.

“The Law of International Trade and Economic Relations,” as it was called, was sponsored by the Section on International Law and Practice of the American Bar Association to give the participants an overview of the international and national trading system, including GATT and U.S. trade laws. The ABA called upon Jackson to present the course after the enthusiastic response generated by a similar one he developed and presented earlier for the U.S. Treasury Department. For that course, the Treasury Department awarded him the Office of the Secretary Honor Award “for outstanding service to the government.”

The course format was largely lectures by Jackson, interspersed with debates, guest speakers, panels, and a colloquium. Topics included tariffs and other import restrictions, rule implementation, dispute resolution, most favored nation obligations, safeguards and the escape clause, and unfair trade practices (anti-dumping and subsidy-countervailing rules). One of the high points of the Wye session was “the problem,” a hypothetical situation presented to the audience the last evening of the course. The participants, most of whom brought the perspectives of their own special areas to the group, found the session totally engrossing. As one of them remarked to Jackson later, “We started at eight o’clock and suddenly it was ten and we had to adjourn.”

The author of five books, including World Trade and the Law of GATT (1969) and Implementing the Tokyo Round: National Constitutions and International Economic Rules (1984), Jackson is now at work on two new volumes. One is a second edition of a casebook on trade law, which he is co-authoring with William Davey, a U-M alumnus (J.D. ’74, A.B. ’71) now teaching at the University of Illinois Law School; the other is a monograph, as yet untitled, on international trade policy, which is to be published by the M.I.T. Press.