The Civil Rights and Mediation Clinic Experience

The Civil Rights and Mediation Clinic introduces students to civil practice and dispute resolution from a community-based perspective. The Clinic focuses on housing, education, and consumer discrimination, and on municipal court reform, including discrimination in fines, fees, bail, and driver’s license suspensions. Clinic students provide individual representation for low-income clients with housing, foreclosure, education, consumer, and municipal court claims in collaboration with two community legal services providers that protect the civil rights of individuals in these client groups: Legal Services of Eastern Missouri (LSEM) and St. Louis Equal Housing & Opportunity Council (EHOC). During the semester, clinic students interview, counsel, and represent a minimum of six clients.

Clinic students also provide community representation on behalf of these client groups and engage in a diverse range of community lawyering strategies, including impact litigation, legislative drafting and advocacy, policy development, communication and media advocacy, community legal education (“street law”), and dispute resolution, under the supervision of Professor Tokarz. Clinic students assist with a minimum of six mediations in the St. Louis City Pro-Se Housing Court (and potential new Small Claims Court mediation) and/or at U.S. Arbitration & Mediation.

Past clinic students report gains in a variety of key areas, including writing clearly and effectively, solving complex real world problems, improving client advocacy and dispute resolution skills, contributing to the welfare of the community, understanding people of different racial and class backgrounds, working collaboratively with professionals from other disciplines, learning effectively on one’s own through reflective practice, and developing a professional identity.

Pre-/Co-Requisites

A course from the ethics curriculum is required. Courses in the areas of housing, consumer, education, and dispute resolution are highly recommended and may affect your priority for placement.

Requirements

Students must devote a minimum of 21 hours per week to clinic work for 6 credits or 28 hours for 8 credits. Students also must attend a three-hour weekly seminar and meet on a regular basis with Professor Tokarz.

The Bottom Line

- The course is graded on a modified pass/fail basis.
- This course can be taken for 6 credits (requiring 21 hours of clinic work per week) or, with permission of the instructor, for 4-5 or up to 8 credits.
- There are weekly reading assignments, required weekly journals, and required client community projects.
- There is no final exam.

For more information:

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