The Clinic Experience

The Civil Rights & Community Justice Clinic introduces students to civil rights practice and dispute resolution from a community-based perspective. Clinic students engage in interviewing and counseling, case analysis and planning, problem solving, fact investigation, document drafting, written and oral advocacy, legislative advocacy, community education and organizing, policy development, communication and media advocacy, administrative practice, transactional practice, litigation, and dispute resolution.

During the semester, clinic students interview, counsel, and represent a minimum of 6 clients. Clinic students participate in and observe at least 3 mediations or other dispute resolution processes at US Arbitration & Mediation Service-Midwest, EEOC, Community Mediation Service, Missouri Department of Special Education, St. Louis City Housing Court, and/or the Better Business Bureau.

Clinic students provide individual representation for their clients - immigrants/refugees, workers, individuals with housing and home mortgage concerns, seniors, and individuals with HIV/AIDS and other disabilities - in conjunction with community legal services providers and non-profits that protect and advance the civil rights of individuals in these client groups. These providers typically include the Legal Services of Eastern Missouri Immigration Project and the Public Benefits Project (Health & Welfare Unit), St. Louis Equal Housing Opportunity Council, Beyond Housing, the Immigration Law Firm, EEOC, and the NLRB.

Clinic students also provide broader-based community representation and engage in a diverse range of "non-traditional," sometimes interdisciplinary, collaborative, community lawyering strategies and skills, including legislative drafting and advocacy, community education ("street law"), policy development, communication and media advocacy, and dispute resolution.

The Mediation Clinic operates in conjunction with the Civil Rights & Community Justice Clinic and introduces students to mediation and dispute resolution practice in various contexts. Clinic students mediate disputes at the Better Business Bureau, typically two afternoons a week, under the supervision of Professor Larkin.

Students also observe and participate in, to the degree possible, mediations at US Arbitration & Mediation Service-Midwest, EEOC, Community Mediation Service, Missouri Department of Special Education, and/or St. Louis City Housing Court.

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, developing a professional identity, and clarifying career goals. This course is beneficial for JD/MSW, JD/MBA, JD/MPH, and other joint degree students and students who contemplate starting their own firms.

Highlights

CIVIL RIGHTS & COMMUNITY JUSTICE CLINIC faculty and students recently:

- Collaborated with government officials, community housing organizations, and lenders to draft, enact, and implement ordinances requiring home foreclosure mediation in St. Louis County and St. Louis City.
- Partnered with Legal Services of Eastern Missouri Public Benefits Project to develop an elder law and estate planning project in which clinic students provide wills, powers of attorney, health care directives, and guardianships to seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- Partnered with the Migrant and Immigrant Community Action Project (M.I.C.A) to develop community education materials and podcasts regarding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Act (DACA).
Requirements

- Devote a minimum of 27 hours to Clinic work (for 8 credits), 21 hours per week (for 6 credits), 14 hours per week (for 4 credits).
- Attend three-hour weekly seminar.
- Meet on a regular basis with Professor Tokarz or Professor Larkin.
- Participate in 8 hours of interviewing, counseling, and mediation training at the beginning of the semester to prepare students for client representation and dispute resolution.
- Conduct in-depth investigations of client communities during first two weeks of semester.
- Provide some form of community legal education (“street law”) in collaboration with community partners.

Pre– or Co-requisites

A course from the ethics curriculum is a pre- or co-requisite. The following courses are highly recommended and may affect your priority for placement: Immigration Law, Individual Rights & the Constitution, Employment Discrimination, Non-profit Organizations Planning and Drafting, Sexuality & the Law: Theory & Practice, Feminist Legal Theory Seminar, Introduction to US and Comparative ADR, Mediation Theory & Practice.

The Bottom Line

- Enrollment limited to 10 students.
- The course is graded on a modified pass/fail basis (HP94, P, LP78, F70).
- This is a 6-8 credit course (4-5 with permission of instructor).
- There will be weekly reading assignments, required weekly journals, and a required community research project.
- The professor will set specific requirements for receiving credit.
- There is no final exam.
- Students certified under Rule 13 may be given preference.