Civil Rights, Community Justice, and Mediation Clinic

The Clinic Experience

The Civil Rights, Community Justice, and Mediation Clinic (CRCJM) introduces students to civil rights, mediation, and dispute resolution practice from a community-based perspective.

Clinic students provide individual representation for their clients – immigrants and refugees; individuals with housing and home mortgage concerns; individuals with municipal court charges; individuals with consumer and bankruptcy issues; and seniors and individuals receiving public benefits - in conjunction with community legal services providers and non-profits that protect and advance the civil rights of individuals in these client groups in the St. Louis metro area. These providers typically include Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation, Metro St. Louis Equal Housing & Opportunity Council, Beyond Housing, Arch City Defenders, and related non-profit agencies and offices. During the semester, clinic students interview, counsel, and represent a minimum of six clients.

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

Clinic students also participate in and observe at least three mediations or other dispute resolution processes at US Arbitration & Mediation Service-Midwest, EEOC, St. Louis City Housing Court, and/or the Better Business Bureau.

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.

CRCJM students engage in every facet of civil practice: 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, media advocacy, administrative practice, transactional practice, litigation, mediation, and dispute resolution. This course is particularly beneficial for JD/MSW, JD/MBA, JD/MPH, and other joint degree students and students who contemplate starting their own firms.

Highlights

CRCJM faculty and students recently:

- Collaborated with the U.S. Dist.Ct., E.D. Mo., to develop a problem-solving, diversion court.
- Collaborated with government officials, community housing organizations, and lenders to draft, enact, implement, and litigate legislation requiring home foreclosure mediation in St. Louis County and St. Louis City.
- Partnered with Legal Services of LSEM 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 to develop community education materials and podcasts regarding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Act.
Typical Activities
CIVIL RIGHTS, COMMUNITY JUSTICE, AND MEDIATION CLINIC students
• Interview, counsel, and represent clients
• Participate in administrative hearings and litigation at state and federal levels
• Participate in legislative advocacy and lobbying
• Participate in community education and media advocacy
• Participate in mediations and other dispute resolution experiences at U.S. Arbitration & Mediation, the Better Business Bureau, and other dispute resolution locations
• Collaborate with local non-profits to protect the civil rights of immigrants and refugees, workers, individuals with municipal court charges, individuals with housing and home mortgage concerns, seniors, and individuals with disabilities denied public benefits

Requirements
• Devote a minimum of 28 hours to Clinic work (for 8 credits), 21 hours per week (for 6 credits), 17.5 hours per week (for 5 credits).
• Attend three-hour weekly seminar.
• Meet on a regular basis with Professor Tokarz.
• Participate in interviewing, counseling, and mediation training at the beginning of the semester to prepare for client representation, mediations, and dispute resolution.
• Conduct in-depth investigations of client communities during first two weeks of semester.
• Provide community legal education ("street law") in collaboration with community partners.

For more information, contact:
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Pre/Co-requisites
A course from the ethics curriculum is a pre/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, Drafting & Negotiation, Sexuality & the Law: Theory & Practice, Feminist Legal Theory Seminar, Housing/Real Estate Planning, Drafting & Negotiation, Introduction to US & Comparative Dispute Resolution, Multi-Party & Public Policy Dispute Resolution, Mediation Theory & Practice, Arbitration Theory & Practice, Business Negotiation Theory & Practice.

The Bottom Line
• Enrollment limited to 10 - 12 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 are weekly reading assignments, required weekly journals, and required client community projects.
• The professor will set specific requirements for receiving credit.
• There is no final exam.
• Students certified under Rule 13 may be given preference.

Professor Tokarz and CRCJM students celebrate clinic successes with community partners at the end of the fall 2014 semester