Appellate Clinic

The Appellate Clinic Experience

Professor Bruce La Pierre, a veteran constitutional law professor and an experienced appellate advocate, established the Appellate Clinic in 2004.

Students brief and argue cases in the United States Courts of Appeals for the Sixth and Eighth Circuits under the supervision of Professor La Pierre and Adjunct Professor Brian C. Walsh, an appellate litigation partner at Bryan Cave. The clerks of the two Courts of Appeals assign cases to the Clinic, and students work on all aspects of the appeals. In most cases, one student will have an opportunity to argue the appeal. Each member of the Clinic should be prepared to do extensive research and will have an opportunity to write and revise substantial portions of the brief.

At the beginning of the semester, there will be a few regularly scheduled meetings—on a day and at a time convenient for the students and instructors. Later in the semester, students will meet in groups assigned to particular cases, and they must be prepared to meet as often as necessary to complete the appeal.

Student Perspectives

“Working with Professor La Pierre and Brian Walsh, as well as the faculty, local attorneys, and Clinic members, in preparation for the argument gave me the confidence I needed to appear before the court and taught me a tremendous amount about oral advocacy and litigation strategy. It was an amazing experience to be able to appear before such a distinguished panel.”

“Nothing I did at Wash U was as thrilling as standing up before a panel of the Eighth Circuit and arguing on behalf of my client through the Appellate Clinic. The semester spent preparing our case with Professor La Pierre, Lee Marshal and other clinic students made me a better writer, a better advocate and most importantly, a better legal thinker.”

“Washington University’s Appellate Clinic was undeniably the highlight of my law career. The opportunity to represent individuals who might otherwise have lacked legal counsel was both personally and professionally rewarding. Through unsurpassed mentorship, wisdom and guidance, Bruce La Pierre and Lee Marshal contributed immeasurably to my professional growth. While briefing honed the research and writing skills employed daily in my litigation practice, the most thrilling aspect of the Appellate Clinic was the privilege of arguing in the Eighth Circuit on behalf of one of the Clinic’s clients.”

Once assigned a case, students in the Appellate Clinic handle all aspects of the appeal.
**Highlights**

Won retaliatory transfer case in the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit on December 26, 2013.

The case, *Spencer v. Jackson County*, involved a pretrial detainee who was admitted to the “trustee” program in a county jail, which afforded him privileges and freedom not available to the general population, and who was abruptly removed from the program when a jail official recalled that he had filed a lawsuit against her after a previous jail stay. The Eighth Circuit concluded that the district court had applied the wrong legal standard in granting summary judgment for the jail officials and that, under the proper standard, Spencer had established viable issues for trial.

**Current Cases**

- Walter v Kelly (13-3742) (6th Cir.)
- Clifton v. Carpenter (13-5402) (6th Cir.)

**Recent Cases**

- Walls v. Tadman, 762 F.3d 778 (8th Cir. 2014)
- Spencer v. Jackson County, 738 F.3d 907 (8th Cir. 2013)
- Washington v. McQuiggin, 529 Fed. Appx. 766 (6th Cir. 2013)
- Taylor v. Dormire, 690 F.3d 898 (8th Cir. 2012)
- Kaden v. Slykhuis, 651 F.3d 966 (8th Cir. 2011)
- Persechini v. Callaway, 651 F.3d 802 (8th Cir. 2011)
- United States v. Watson, 623 F.3d 542 (8th Cir. 2010)
- Washington v. Blunt, 384 F. App’x 529 (8thCir. 2010)
- Munson v. Norris, 375 F. App’x 638 (8th Cir. 2010)
- Allen v. United States Air Force, 603 F.3d 423 (8th Cir. 2010)
- Serna v. Goodno, 567 F.3d 944 (8th Cir. 2009)
- Smith v. International Paper, 523 F.3d 845 (8th Cir. 2008)
- United States v. McMannus, 262 F. App’x 732 (8th Cir. 2008)

**Requirements**

- The Appellate Clinic course requires superior research and writing skills.
- Students must be prepared to commit substantial amounts of time to preparing their clients’ cases.

**Prerequisites**

- There are no prerequisites for the Appellate Clinic.

**The Bottom Line**

- Enrollment is limited to 8 students.
- This is a 4 credit course.
- The course is graded on a modified pass/fail basis.
- There is no final exam.

**Appellate Clinic Faculty**

Professor Bruce La Pierre
Brian C. Walsh

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