The Criminal Justice Clinic Experience

The Criminal Justice Clinic operates in collaboration with the St. Louis County office of the Missouri State Public Defender System. The clinic exposes students to real life lawyering skills within the framework of the criminal justice system for adults charged with misdemeanor or felony offenses. The clinic is located in the St. Louis County Public Defender Office, approximately 1.5 miles from the school in the County Justice Center in Clayton. Each student works closely with Professor Peter Joy as well as with attorneys in the Public Defender Office.

The major objective of the clinic is to assist the student in the transition to the role of a practicing lawyer by serving as lead counsel on preliminary hearings, bond hearings, and occasionally suppression and other pretrial motions, assisting with Circuit Court Dockets and probation revocation hearings, and assisting with pretrial motions and trials in felony cases.

Students work under student practice Rule 13 and are certified to perform the tasks of providing competent representation to clients and exposed to the legal and ethical problems criminal defense lawyers face. Students confront these problems in the lawyer’s role, identify and work to solve their clients’ legal problems as well as any ethical issues, and receive feedback on their lawyering skills. By partnering with the Public Defender Office, students are immersed in the workings of this typical public defender office while still providing students with faculty supervision.

Typical Activities

- Conduct initial appearances and assist with dockets.
- Represent clients in preliminary hearings, bond hearings, probation revocation hearings, and suppression motions for felony cases.
- Interview and counsel clients.
- Draft briefs, motions, and other legal documents.
- Engage in strategic case planning.
- Whenever possible, sit second chair in a major felony case and/or participate in a misdemeanor trial.

Pre-/Co-Requisites

There are no pre-requisites. However, preference will be given to students who have completed Evidence, Pretrial, Trial Practice, an Ethics course, and Criminal Procedure.

Requirements

Students must reserve at least two mornings a week between Monday and Thursday to assist with the preliminary hearing docket (typically 8:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.). However, the best schedule is one that allows the student to be in the office three or more mornings and to complete the rest of the scheduled hours in the afternoons. Open only to students who are able to be Rule 13 certified.

The Bottom Line

- Students must be Rule 13 certified.
- Graded on a modified pass/fail basis; no textbook or final exam.
- This course can be taken for 6 credits (requiring 21 hours of clinic work per week), or with permission of instructor, a student may enroll for 8 credits.

For more information:

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http://law.wustl.edu/clinicaled/pages.asp?Id=6832