

Clinical Offerings—Spring 2013

International Human and Refugee Rights Clinic (Professor Gwynne Skinner)

In the International Human Rights Clinic, students will have the opportunity to work with clients seeking asylum cases; international human rights cases under the Alien Tort Statute, including litigation representing former Guantanamo Bay detainees in civil litigation, including cases before the various Circuit Courts of Appeal; human rights fact-finding and report writing; and other human rights advocacy projects. These cases involve interacting with and interviewing clients and potential clients; legal and factual research typical in international human rights cases, writing legal memoranda and briefs; and collaborating with local, regional, and national human rights NGOs. Preference is given to students who have successfully completed or are simultaneously taking International Law and Dispute Resolution course and/or the Human Rights Seminar.

Law & Government Clinic (Professor Andrew Shull)

Students in the Law and Government Clinic will investigate complaints filed with the Oregon Attorney's General Financial Fraud/Consumer Protection Section. Investigations are conducted under the Attorney's General enforcement including enforcement pursuant to Oregon's Unlawful Trade Practices Act (UTPA). Students working on these investigations gather evidence, including witness interviews, substantiating the consumer complaint and drafting civil investigative demands, assurances of voluntary compliance and complaints. Participating in negotiations with the business is often the final phase of the investigation. Law and Government students cannot be actively clerking elsewhere during the semester.

Business Law Clinic (Professor Warren Binford)

Students in the Business Law Clinic provide legal advice and assistance primarily to non-profit corporations and start up businesses. Business Law Clinic students meet with clients and frequently draft contracts, advice letters, and incorporation documents. The students tend to work fairly closely with non-profit executives and emerging business owners. They also advise on issues ranging from employment matters to insurance issues.

Child & Family Advocacy Clinic (Professor Warren Binford)

The Child & Family Advocacy Clinic is devoted to the protection of children and families across the country and around the world. The faculty and students work to advance legal protections that provide stability to the family structure and nurture children's healthy development, as well as pro bono legal representation to individual children and families in crisis. Students in the Child and Family Advocacy Clinic have the opportunity to represent parties in restraining order cases involving family violence as well as adoptions, guardianships, education advocacy cases and impact litigation. In addition to gaining experience interviewing clients and conducting legal research and factual investigations, many students make courtroom appearances and often conduct depositions and discovery.

Sustainability Law Clinic (Professor Jon Ostar)

The Sustainability Law Clinic provides students with an opportunity to work on emerging issues at the intersection of environmental law and policy and civil rights law. With a focus on environmental justice issues, clinical students approach case work from a client empowerment perspective. All students enrolled in the Sustainability Law Clinic work to empower impacted client communities through direct advocacy and capacity-building efforts. This work includes significant factual investigation, legal research and analysis, and development of dual-strategy approaches to include both legal and non-legal avenues. In the Sustainability Law Clinic, we strive to ensure each student will have opportunities to engage in real-life issues that impact disenfranchised populations and obtain practical skills to provide a holistic legal experience. Students gain a broader perspective of environmental policy and regulation and come to understand sustainability as requiring equity and opportunity for all.

For more information about any particular clinic, please contact the supervising professor directly or the Clinical Law Program acting director, Gwynne Skinner, at 503-370-6126 or gskinner@willamette.edu.

Common Questions about the Clinical Law Program

What is the Clinical Law Program?

The Clinical Law Program is the in-house law firm at the law school. It is where our law students begin to learn to practice law under the close supervision of the law faculty.

What areas of law are practiced in the Clinical Law Program?

There are sections of International Human and Refugee Rights Law, Business Law, Law and Government, Sustainability Law, and Child and Family Advocacy.

Who teaches in the Clinical Law Program?

Professor Warren Binford is director of the Clinical Law Program and teaches the Child and Family Advocacy Clinic and Business Law Clinic. Professor Gwynne Skinner teaches the International Human and Refugee Rights Clinic. Professor Andrew Shull teaches the Law & Government Clinic and Professor Jon Ostar teaches the Sustainability Law Clinic.

How is it staffed?

The Clinical Law Program is essentially staffed by Willamette law students under the supervision of Willamette law faculty. We also have a full-time administrative assistant and a part-time paralegal.

Who should enroll in the Clinical Law Program?

Second- and Third-Year students who would like to have more “hands on” experience with the practice of law should enroll in the Clinical Law Program. It is also appropriate for students who would like to (1) “try out” a particular area of practice prior to graduation, or (2) apply abstract legal principles that have engaged them intellectually in lecture classes and seminars earlier in their law school career.

What is the difference between clinics and externships?

Externships allow you to work in law-related positions outside of the law school. The Clinical Law Program is based here in the law school and allows you to work closely with law school faculty on law-related work.

What type of work will I do in the Clinical Law Program?

It depends on the clinic you enroll in. Most of our students gain a tremendous amount of experience interviewing and counseling clients, developing legal strategies, and researching and drafting legal documents. Many students become relatively involved in negotiations both with opposing counsel and parties and with their own clients. Detailed descriptions of the work offered in each clinic is included above.

How many credits can I get for clinic?

It depends on how many you want and earn. Clinical students can receive up to eight (8) hours of academic credit for clinical work during their entire law school career. The number of credits earned depends on the number of hours worked. Students are eligible for one hour of credit for each 52 hours of work (including class hours), with a minimum of two (2) credit hours required. The more hours a student wants to work, the more academic hours the student can earn (up to four (4) credits per semester).

How many semesters may I enroll in the Clinical Law Program?

Students can enroll for up to two semesters in the Clinical Law Program if they perform well during their first semester of clinic.

How is the Clinical Law Program graded?

All clinics are graded on a standard letter grade basis (A, B, C, D, F) both semesters.

What is the class requirement?

Clinical students are required to attend two hours of class per week during their first semester. Clinical students eligible to return as advanced clinic students may be required to attend fewer class hours. All class time counts towards the overall hours requirement.

Does enrollment in the Clinical Law Program satisfy the professional writing requirement?

Yes, as long as you complete a significant amount of high-quality professional writing during your time in the Clinical Law Program.

Is it true that the Clinical Law Program usually has a waitlist?

Yes, but we work very hard to ensure that all students who try to register, are enrolled at least one semester prior to graduation. The more you register, the more likely you are to get in.

How do you choose clinical students?

We generally favor third-year students since they are closest to graduation and are more likely to be court certified, which allows them to make court appearances and conduct depositions. However, we always save a few spots (10-30%) for second-year students so that we have a core of advanced students to provide leadership the following year, and also because there always seem to be a group of second-year students especially eager to gain legal experience early in their legal career. Students must have successfully completed LRW I and II in order to enroll in any of the clinics.