

Clinical Offerings—Spring 2021

Trusts & Estates Clinic (Professor Susan Cook)

Students in the Trusts & Estates Clinic represent clients who need estate planning documents such as wills, living trusts, durable powers of attorney, and advance medical directives. Typical clients want to plan for the future of their minor children, provide for possible incapacity prior to death, designate the beneficiaries who will receive their property at death, or address issues related to a terminal illness. Each pair of students will conduct client interviews, draft documents, and supervise the execution of final documents. Clients require only non-tax planning.

Immigration and Human Rights Law Clinic (Professors Maria Zlateva and Patrick Sherwood)

In the Immigration and Human Rights Law Clinic, students have the opportunity to work with clients seeking immigration protections. 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 possibly collaborating with local, regional, and national human rights NGOs. Preference may be given to students who have successfully completed immigration law.

Business Law Clinic (Professor Mark Hoyt)

Students in the Business Law Clinic provide legal advice and assistance primarily to nonprofit corporations and emerging businesses. Business Law Clinic students meet with clients and frequently draft contracts, advice letters, incorporation documents, and IRS filings related to tax-exempt status. They also conduct legal research and formulate legal strategies. The students tend to work fairly closely with non-profit executives and emerging business owners. They also advise on issues ranging from intellectual property to employment matters to insurance issues. Business law clinic students usually conduct 4-6 client meetings per semester.

Advanced Civil Practice Clinic (Professor Warren Binford)

This semester only Professor Binford will be working with a select group of advanced clinic students who have successfully completed at least one semester of clinic previously. The students will be working intensively with Professor Binford on a limited number of matters, ranging from legislation to public policy advocacy to reports and traditional client representation in the areas of business law and child and family advocacy.

There will be no Child and Family Advocacy Clinic offered in Spring 2020.

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?

In Spring 2020, we are offering sections of Immigration and Human Rights Law, Business Law, and Trusts and Estates, as well as an Advanced Civil Practice Clinic for a select number of returning clinic students.

Who teaches in the Clinical Law Program?

Professor Warren Binford is Director of the Clinical Law Program and will be teaching the Advanced Civil Practice Clinic. Professor Mark Hoyt will be teaching the Business Law Clinic. Professors Maria Zlateva and Patrick Sherwood teach the Immigration and Human Rights Clinic. Professor Susan Cook teaches the Trusts & Estates 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 who works as the clinic manager.

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. Clinics are organized as educational programs and tend to allow students to serve as the attorneys and take on more responsibility.

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.

How many credits can I receive for my clinical work?

It depends on how many you want and earn. 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?

There is no limit to how many semesters a student can enroll in the Clinical Law Program. However, in order to advance, you must perform well in your clinical work.

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.

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 for 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.

For more information about any particular clinic, please contact the professor supervising the particular clinic that interests you or the Clinical Law Program Director, Professor Warren Binford, at 916-719-7796 or wbinford@willamette.edu.