Practicum Information Packet – Fall 2016

Attached are the descriptions of the Fall 2016 semester practicum course offerings through the SUNY Buffalo Clinical Legal Education Program. Please review this carefully as some practicum courses have prerequisites or co-requisites. All interested students should apply for a SUNY Buffalo Legal practicum via the online application. Please note that there is a separate application for applying to a clinic. Please see the Registrar’s website for further details.

Applicants should be aware that practicum students are NOT considered members of the SUNY Buffalo Clinical Legal Education Program Law Practice, and will not be admitted to practice under a practice order. However, you will be eligible to earn hours towards your pro bono requirements, and taking a practicum will satisfy your skills requirement.

In order to give opportunities to all students who want an experiential learning experience, students are strongly discouraged from enrolling in more than one experiential course in a semester (i.e., a clinic, practicum, or externship). Permission will be granted in very limited cases, and only after a meeting with Professor Kim Diana Connolly.

Questions regarding the clinical program or related experiential learning should be directed to Professor Kim Diana Connolly, kimconno@buffalo.edu.

Application Instructions

To apply for a practicum, please

1. Complete the online application. List your first choice for a practicum. You may list a second choice if you wish.
2. Submit the online application by providing your electronic signature.
3. All Practica require additional materials (resume, cover letter, & transcript) – please submit this information to law-clinic@buffalo.edu.
4. Submit your online application by Monday, 21 March 2016 at 5:00 PM.
5. You will be notified by email of whether or not you have been selected. Based on the selection process of the practicum course(s) to which you are applying, the timing of these notifications differ.
6. Practicum courses are popular, so acceptance to a Practicum is not guaranteed. We recommend that you register for a full schedule in case there is not room for you in a clinic. If you are approved for a clinic and submit all the required paperwork, we will notify the registrar and help you adjust your schedule.

Acceptance to a Practicum is not guaranteed, so we recommend that you register for a full schedule in case there is not room for you in a practicum. If you are approved for a practicum and submit all the required paperwork, you may drop a course during the drop/add period.
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CRIMINAL LAW PRACTICUM

Adjunct Professor Robert Convissar

4 Credits

Students enrolled in this course will actively participate in the defense of criminal cases handled by local attorneys under the Erie County Assigned Counsel Program, which provides legal assistance to indigent defendants. Students will be required to perform approximately 10 hours per week of fieldwork in this course. Depending upon case needs, students will assist assigned counsel in investigating and preparing cases for trial (including researching relevant legal and evidentiary issues, writing trail memoranda, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the case, preparing witnesses and attending the trail) as well as evaluating plea offers and sentence commitments. Students will also produce a brief applied research paper on a topic of choice related to their fieldwork. These papers may be published online. In addition to working directly with assigned counsel, students will attend evening classroom sessions to review the law and policy, prepare for their fieldwork and discuss related issues.

Prerequisite: Criminal Procedure, New York Criminal Law or equivalent
POST-INCARCERATION FEDERAL REENTRY PRACTICUM

Professor Monica Wallace and Adjunct Professor Paul Curtain
4 Credits

Each year over 650,000 ex-offenders are released from state and federal custody with dreams of successfully reestablishing themselves back into their communities. Upon release, these individuals and their families face legal and social obstacles to successful reentry, including challenges finding employment, housing, and social assistance. These obstacles interfere with successful community reintegration and increase the likelihood of recidivism. In this Post-Incarceration Reentry Practicum, we will discuss barriers to reentry and explore potential solutions. Students enrolled in this Practicum will actively contribute to the civil representation of individuals participating in the Western District of New York’s Federal Reentry Court. The Federal Reentry Court provides intensive probation oversight as well as holistic legal services to each voluntary participant. Students will have the opportunity to gain direct, hands-on experience in identifying and resolving the legal and social barriers faced by persons with criminal records attempting to reestablish themselves in the community.

Working with a full-time SUNY Buffalo professor and a full-time Legal Aid attorney, students will engage in classroom study and intense service learning. Legal Aid will serve as the host site for office hours, client contact, and internal case review. Students will be assigned to work with a staff attorney at Legal Aid and will interview program participants and assist in the identification of barriers to housing, employment, education, and family reunification. Students will research legal issues and participate in the drafting of memoranda and motions. In addition to weekly classes, students will be expected to attend and participate in the bi-weekly Federal Reentry Court sessions including case review with Judge Hugh Scott, probation, and court staff. A final research paper will be required of each student.
PRO SE CIVIL LITIGATION SUPPORT PRACTICUM
Professor Bernadette Gargano
4 Credits

More than twenty-five million Americans are denied legal assistance each year due to lack of resources. The failure to provide legal assistance to our country’s most vulnerable populations has been recognized as a “crisis” by both state and federal actors. This crisis impacts individuals that are already most at risk, including communities of color, poor and low-income families, and people with disabilities. Without the funds to retain counsel and with the pool of free legal services shrinking due to funding cuts, millions of litigants in both state and federal courts are unrepresented and lack access to even the most basic legal resources.

In this service learning practicum, students will support practicing attorneys working with the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project. Students will engage in experiential learning and develop “profession-ready” legal skills by assisting lawyers in supporting “pro se” litigants in Erie County Family Court and the U.S. District Court for the Western District of New York, including staffing a newly-developed legal resource center at the federal courthouse. Working with full-time SUNY Buffalo Law School professor and civil litigator Bernadette Gargano and a family law practitioner, students will also participate in classroom study. Students will meet with pro se litigants, perform legal research, write legal memoranda and white papers, develop legal resources for unrepresented litigants, develop community learning opportunities, and provide assistance in navigating legal documents and the court system. Students will also write a brief research paper on a related topic that will be published on the law school website.