COURSE NAME: Legal Aid Clinic

CATALOGUE NUMBER: 8790

PROFESSORS: Glesner Fines

ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITE:

1. Students may enroll in the clinic subject to instructor approval and field work placement availability. STUDENTS MUST APPLY FOR AND BE ACCEPTED TO A FIELD PLACEMENT BY THE END OF THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASSES.
2. Students may not receive compensation for their work in the clinic. Students may not work for compensation in the same office in which they are also participating as a clinical student.
3. Students may not participate in more than one clinic at a time. Students are cautioned against part-time employment while enrolled in the clinic. In order to screen for conflicts of interest, all students must disclose any part-time legal employment (whether paid or volunteer) they are or will be undertaking during the clinic year.
4. Students must apply for Rule 13 certification for law student practice. Students may apply in the dean’s office. The applications may take up to eight weeks to be approved; thus, early application is critical if students are to be eligible to undertake courtroom representation upon beginning their field work.

METHOD OF GRADING AND APPRAISAL OF STUDENT FOR GRADE:

Clinic is graded pass/fail. Students must complete a learning contract within the first week of their placement and return to the supervising professor. All requirements of that contract must be timely completed to receive course credit. At a minimum, students must provide a minimum of 90 hours (for 2 credit hours) or 135 hours (for 3 credit hours) of service learning to LAWMO during the internship program and must maintain and submit time records and journal reflections on work during the clinic every two weeks to the supervising professor. These records must be sufficiently detailed to present a clear picture of the activities the student has been pursuing and what the student is learning. Additional requirements, including regularly scheduled class meetings, may exist for some field placements. Work at LAWMO must extend over at least ten weeks of the semester; they may begin and end before or after the semester with permission of the supervising attorney and faculty supervisor.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF COURSE:

The primary goal of the Legal Aid Clinic is that, through classroom study, field practice, and personal reflection, students will develop professional attitudes and aptitudes necessary to effective legal aid practice. Students are then placed with a supervising attorney at Legal Aid of Western Missouri, working in one of the following areas of practice: Government benefits (state and federal); Housing (public and private); Consumer protection; Community Development; Family Law and Municipal criminal defense.
COURSE CONTENT:

Among the professional attitudes the clinic seeks to develop are:

1. Personal responsibility for setting and meeting high standards of quality representation. To develop this attitude, students must understand the nature of legal aid practice and must also know their own strengths and weaknesses.
2. Respectful understanding and balanced concern for the legal aid client. To develop this attitude, students must understand the resources and needs of low-income clients, and the common characteristics of the culture of poverty. Students must be able to recognize their own unexamined attitudes and emotions toward persons based on their class, race, age, gender and handicap.

Among the professional aptitudes developed in the clinic are:

1. Knowledge of general legal doctrines relating to the poverty community, and in-depth knowledge of legal doctrines and procedures relating to one field of poverty law practice.
2. High degree of skill in research and written analysis of issues relevant to the field placement.
3. Minimal competence in personal communications skills necessary for legal aid practice (e.g., client and witness interviewing).
4. Minimal competence in preparation of document appropriate to field practice (e.g. drafting pleadings).
5. Minimal competence in case preparation skills as appropriate to field practice.
6. Minimal competence in office management skills, including appropriate time keeping methods, file management, and asking for and receiving feedback from supervising attorneys.

COURSE BOOK(S):
None

RELEVANCY OF COURSE FOR CAREER PURPOSES:
Whether preparing for a career in poverty law, or simply preparing for the practice of law in general, a clinic experience is highly relevant.

RELEVANCY OF COURSE FOR MO/MULTI-STATE BAR EXAMINATION PREPARATION:
Tangential.