Opportunities for Specialization in the Study of Law

Mason’s Litigation Law Concentration or Track and Mason’s Criminal Law Concentration prepare students for practice in civil and criminal litigation in the court system. Students take the substantive as well as the skills-based courses they need to resolve litigation matters both in and outside the courtroom.

In terms of substantive law, students take courses in civil and criminal procedure, federal courts and proof.

In terms of skills, in order to perfect oral and written argument, master effective communication, and develop factual analysis and presentation, students pursue courses in trial advocacy, pretrial practice discovery, litigation and dispute resolution, and four intense semesters of legal writing. They practice their skills through our supervised externship opportunities and leave Mason prepared to embark on a civil or criminal litigation practice.

Start pursuing your career options early in your legal education to maximize your opportunities. The Office of Career, Academic and Alumni Services (CAAS) is here to help you plot a course. To assist students in finding employment, CAAS meets with students individually and helps them prepare cover letters and resumes. CAAS hosts employer recruiting programs in the fall and spring, pays registration fees for job fairs and networking events throughout the country, and hosts numerous informational and networking events at the law school. In recent semesters, sessions related to Legal and Economic Theory have included:

- Everything You Want to Know About the U.S. Department of Justice
- Judge Advocate (JAG) Information Session
- Day in the Life of a Criminal Law Lawyer
- Tales of a Supreme Court Law Clerk (and other adventures!)
- Day in the Life: Small Firms
- The Virginia Magistrate System
- Day in the Life: Corporate Litigation.

Practical Experience

Students interested in civil or criminal litigation can enhance their marketability by developing practical experience outside of the classroom. Year-round at Mason, students build skills in the field with Mason’s in-house programs and off-site public and private sector employers. In-house, Mason offers the Clinic for Legal Assistance to Servicemembers and Veterans, the Law and Mental Illness Clinic, the Supreme Court Clinic, and Supervised Externships in Domestic Relations or Immigration Law. Off-site, students can work for pay or earn credit with public and private sector employers in civil litigation or criminal law while working under the supervision of a lawyer. In recent semesters, students have interned for numerous state and federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Justice; various State Attorney General Offices; various Public Defenders’ and Prosecutors’ Offices; U.S. Coast Guard, Office of Criminal Appeals; and the JAG offices of several armed forces branches. Others have worked for nonprofits like Legal Services of Northern Virginia.

In the private sector, students have pursued litigation in law firms with large trial and appellate sections like Wiley Rein; Kirkland and Ellis; Troutman Sanders; and in multiple small and medium-sized law firms. Additionally, students have held clerkships at the state and federal levels.

Field work, coupled with thoughtful course selections and savvy networking, has been critical to Mason students’ success in landing long-term positions as judicial clerks and with employers in the field of civil or criminal litigation.

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In order to complete the Litigation Law Concentration, students must complete the following litigation law courses: Litigation and Dispute Resolution Theory, Evidence, Proof, Trial Advocacy or Trial Advocacy for Competitors, and Pretrial Practice. Additionally, students must choose one procedural elective from the following list: Advanced Constitutional Law: Freedom of Religion; Criminal Procedure; Federal Courts; Legislation; Public Choice and Public Law Seminar; Quantitative Forensics; International Trade; Privacy and Information Security Law; Surveillance Law Seminar; and War and Law Or War and Law Seminar.

Students wishing a more in-depth study in Litigation Law should pursue the Litigation Law Track, which requires Criminal Procedure, Evidence, Federal Courts, Litigation and Dispute Resolution Theory, Litigation Law Track Thesis, Pretrial Practice, Proof, Quantitative Forensics, Trial Advocacy Or Trial Advocacy for Competitors.

In order to complete the Criminal Law Concentration, students must take the following courses: Criminal Procedure, Evidence, Advanced Criminal Procedure, and Litigation and Dispute Resolution. Additionally, students must complete one elective course from the following selections: Supervised Externship, Supervised Externship & Clinic—Domestic Relations, Supervised Externship—Virginia Practice, Trial Advocacy, and Trial Advocacy for Competitors.

Extracurricular Activities

Students have a wide variety of extracurricular activities from which to choose. Mason Law offers an active Moot Court Board and Trial Advocacy Association, allowing students an opportunity to develop skills in appellate advocacy and trial practice. Students may choose from organizations like the Criminal Law Association and the Alternative Dispute Resolution Society for insight into different aspects of the legal system and settlement of disputes. The American Inn of Court offers students a chance to interact with more experienced advocates at a monthly dinner meeting focusing on litigation issues.

Curricular Offerings in Litigation Law or Criminal Law

Featured Faculty Members

Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor Craig Lerner served as an associate independent counsel in the Office of Independent Counsel (Whitewater Investigation). He also has clerked for the Honorable James L. Buckley of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and worked as an associate at Cooper, Carvin, & Rosenthal and Wiley, Rein, & Fielding in Washington, D.C. He received his AB and JD from Harvard and his MA from the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. Professor Lerner teaches Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, Business Associations, and Conflicts of Laws.

Professor Elina Treyger is a graduate of Harvard Law School and holds a PhD in political science from Harvard University and a BA from Cornell University. Prior to joining the Mason Law faculty, Professor Treyger clerked for the Honorable Danny J. Boggs of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and was an Olin/Searle Fellow at Yale Law School. Professor Treyger teaches Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure.

Professor Jeffrey Parker serves as coordinator of the Litigation Law Track and supervises third-year theses by Litigation Law Track students. Prior to joining the George Mason law faculty in 1990, Professor Parker was a practicing lawyer specializing in litigation at Sullivan & Cromwell and Sacks Montgomery in New York City. He also served in the federal government as deputy chief counsel and consulting counsel to the U.S. Sentencing Commission. Professor Parker earned his BIE from the Georgia Institute of Technology and his JD from the University of Virginia.

Professor Parker has been a visiting professor at the University of Graz, Austria, giving a series of lectures on the “George Mason” school of law and economics analysis. Since 2002, he has taught during the summers as a visiting professor at IMADEC University in Vienna, Austria. In 2005, he was named a Senior Fellow of the Goldwater Institute. Professor Parker’s teaching subjects include Civil Procedure, Evidence, Criminal Law, Federal Sentencing Law, and Litigation Management. His research interests include procedure, criminal law, and sentencing.

Asstisted by George Mason law students, Professor Parker continues to appear in litigation involving public policy issues.