

POVERTY LAW FIELD PROGRAM

FALL 2024 / Course #202

(4 credit hours)

Instructor: Vincent L. Smith

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Course Schedule: This is an in-person course, scheduled to meet for two hours per week on Mondays from 4:00pm-6:00pm.

Office Hours: Online office hours are flexible and available by appointment through email. Meetings will be held on Microsoft Teams, accessed through a provided Legal Services of Northern Virginia (LSNV) email account.

Course Description: The Poverty Law Clinic provides students with a first-hand experience practicing poverty law, laws that apply particularly to the poor and disadvantaged members of our community. The Clinic will be a comprehensive course providing classroom instruction on poverty law and simultaneous real-world experience through assigned cases from Legal Services of Northern Virginia (LSNV).

Learning Outcomes: By the end of the course students should have be able to:

- Legal analysis and reasoning, legal research, problem-solving, and written and oral communication in the legal context.
- Exercise of proper professional and ethical responsibilities to clients and the legal system.
- An understanding of case strategy and legal analysis
- Learn substantive law on various subjects related to legal aid clients

Attendance:

Attendance is required weekly class meeting will be held on Monday afternoons. There will also be a weekly individual meeting over Zoom to discuss case developments and evaluation of legal developments and substantive law. If you believe you must be absent from class for more than the permitted number of classes, you should contact the Office of Student Affairs as soon as possible.

Assessments: Assessment will be based primarily on an evaluation of client casework. Class participation and discussion of the readings, simulated exercises, and reflective writings will factor in a grade adjustment.

Computer Policy: Computers are to be used during class for taking notes and no other purpose. They are not to be used to “surf the net” or send email or instant messages. Violations of this rule may lead to you being prohibited from using a laptop during class.

Class Recordings Prohibited: Pursuant to Academic Regulation 4-2.2, no portion of a class session or an examination may be preserved by means of a recording device such as an audio recording device or camera. Any exceptions to this policy must be expressly permitted in writing by me.

Classroom Accommodations: Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please visit <https://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disabilities Registration Process. Faculty may not receive or respond to requests for an accommodation. All requests must be handled by the office of Disability Services. You may contact Disability Services directly via email at ods@gmu.edu or phone at (703) 993-2474. If you have any questions about how in-class or testing accommodations are implemented at the law school, please contact the Assistant Dean, Student Academic Affairs for more information.

COVID Health & Safety Requirements: It is important to note that under current University health and safety protocols, face coverings and social distancing are required for all persons on campus. Any student or instructor who anticipates being on campus for any reason should refer to the most up-to-date University policies [here](#).

Course Assignments:

Dates (week of)	Topics	Readings	Assignments
August 26	Intro to the Clinic / Case Management & Protocols		
Wednesday, September 4 – (Monday Schedule)	Client Interviewing & Counseling / Veterans Presentation	Selected Readings: Introduction to Poverty	Connect to firm technology. Poverty law simulation.
September 9	Professional Responsibility / Wills Presentation	Selected Readings: Wills & POAs	Reflection Exercise #1: What is Poverty Law?
September 16	Case Theory / Housing Presentation	Selected Readings: Housing Law	Client Simulation Exercise
September 23	Advocacy Tools / Family Law Presentation	Selected Readings: Family Law	
September 30	Closing Statements	Selected Readings: Social Welfare Policy	
October 4	Case Rounds	Closing Statement Exercise	Reflection #2: Advocacy
October 7	Poverty & Technology	Selected Readings: Welfare	
October 14	OFF – Fall Break		
October 21	Case Rounds		Reflection #3: Client Interactions & Case Handling
October 28	Poverty & Prejudice	Selected Readings: Human Rights	
November 4	Case Rounds		Reflection #3: Client Interactions & Case Handling
November 11	Poverty Policy Discussion	Selected Readings: Poverty & The Constitution	
November 18	Case Rounds		
Thursday, November 21 – (Monday Schedule)	Case Evaluation / Reflection		Case Updates & Final Reflection (due by December 6 th)