



FALL 2026 COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Number: LAW 202-001

Course Title: Poverty Law Field Program

Credit Hours: 4

Grading Mode: Letter Grade

Meeting Day(s)/Time(s): Mondays, 4:00–6:00 p.m.

Meeting Mode: In Person

Exam Day(s)/Time(s): None

Final Exam Mode: Final Reflection Paper

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Corequisite(s): N/A

Instructor(s): Vincent L. Smith

Contact Information: vsmith25@gmu.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Overview

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).

Course Learning Outcomes

- Proficiency in problem solving
- Development of interviewing and client counseling practice
- An understanding of how to case strategy and legal analysis
- Learn substantive law on various subjects related to legal aid clients

Reading(s) & Supplement(s): Selected readings to be provided.

Grading & Classroom Policies

Attendance: Attendance is required weekly class meeting will be held on Monday afternoons. There will also be a bi-weekly individual meeting over Teams 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 [Disability Services](#) 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.

Course Schedule & Assignments

Week 1

Date: August 17

Topic: Intro to the Clinic / Case Management & Protocols

Assignment(s):

Connect to firm technology. Poverty law simulation.

Week 2

Date: August 24

Topic: Client Interviewing & Counseling

Assignment(s):

Selected Readings: Introduction to Poverty

Reflection Exercise #1: What is Poverty Law?

Week 3

Date: August 31

Topic: Professional Responsibility / Wills Presentation

Assignment(s):

Selected Readings: Wills & POAs

Week 4

Date: September 9 (Wednesday)

Topic: Case Theory / Housing Presentation

Assignment(s):

Selected Readings: Housing Law

Week 5

Date: September 14

Topic: Advocacy Tools / Family Law Presentation

Assignment(s):

Week 6

Date: September 21

Topic: Closing Statements

Assignment(s):

Selected Readings: Social Welfare Policy

Reflection #2: Advocacy

Week 7

Date: September 28

Topic: Case Rounds

Assignment(s):

Closing Statement Exercise

Week 8

Date: October 5

Topic: Poverty & Technology

Assignment(s):

Selected Readings: Welfare

Week 9

Date: October 12 – FALL BREAK

Week 10

Date: October 19

Topic: Case Rounds

Assignment(s):

Reflection #3: Client Interactions & Case Handling

Week 11

Date: October 26

Topic: Poverty & Prejudice

Assignment(s):

Selected Readings: Human Rights

Week 12

Date: November 2

Topic: Case Rounds

Assignment(s):

Week 13

Date: November 9

Topic: Poverty Policy Discussion

Assignment(s):

Selected Readings: Poverty & The Constitution

Week 14

Date: November 16

Topic: Case Evaluation / Reflection

Assignment(s):

Case Updates & Final Reflection (due by December 4th)

Student Resources

[Antonin Scalia Law School Academic Regulations](#)

[GMU Common Course Policies Addendum](#)

[Mason Square Services](#)

[Mason Square Police](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room 110

Emergency - Dial 911

Escort Services - 703-993-8070

Dispatch – 703-993-2810

[Student Support and Advocacy Center \(SSAC\)](#)

Mason Square Sexual Assault Services:

Van Metre Hall, Room 222D

703-993-8186

Notice of Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Interpersonal Violence, and Stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If a student wishes to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. Students may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

[Mason Square Clinic](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room B102

703-993-2831

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Disability Services](#)

[University Life](#)