



## SPRING 2026 COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Number: 202-001

Course Title: Poverty Law Field Program

Credit Hours: 4

Grading Mode: CR/ NC

Meeting Time(s): Monday 4:00—6:00p

Meeting Mode: In person

Exam Time(s): N/A

Exam Mode: N/A

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Corequisite(s): N/A

Instructor(s):

Vincent Smith

Contact Information and Office Hours:

[vsmith25@gmu.edu](mailto:vsmith25@gmu.edu)

Reading(s) & Supplement(s):

[OPTIONAL] Poverty Law, Policy, and Practice by Juliet Brodie, Clare Pastore, Ezra Rosser, & Jeffrey Selbin, ISBN-13: 978- 1454812548.

Selected readings to be provided.

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:

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

- 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

#### Grading Policies:

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.

#### Classroom Policies:

**Attendance:** Per AR 3-1.4, “maintenance of matriculation requires regular class preparation, participation and attendance, registration in the course of study required for the student’s program (full-time or part-time), successive registration for each fall and spring term of each academic year until study is completed, and compliance with all other relevant requirements.”

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.

**Absences:** Per AR 4-1.1, “if a student is absent for any reason for more than 20 percent of the sessions of a course, the student is not eligible for credit in that course. A student who is not present for at least 75 percent of a session of the course is absent from that session.”

#### Use of Technology & AI:

Students are encouraged to explore generative AI tools in this course, and are authorized to use AI for any purpose during this course except concerning confidential client information. Students must use AI tools responsibly, verify facts presented by AI, disclose when AI tools are used to create course work product, properly cite any AI tools utilized, and should be prepared to produce the transcript of prompts and responses upon request. Misuse will be treated as a violation of academic standards.

**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.

**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.

## Course Schedule & Assignments

Readings (subject to change throughout semester)

### **Guardianship Readings (along with training materials)**

- J.A. Rosenberg, [Poverty, Guardianship, and the Vulnerable Elderly: Human Rights Dimensions](#).

### **Criminalization of Poverty Readings**

- Kaaryn Gustafson, [The Criminalization of Poverty](#)
- Peter Edelman, [The Criminalization of Poverty and the People Who Fight Back](#).
- Pager, Goldstein, Ho & Western, [Criminalizing Poverty: The Consequences of Court Fees](#)

### **Health Law Readings**

- Lisa F. Wiley, [Health Law as Social Justice](#)
- Yael Cannon, [How Is Access to Legal Resources and Advocacy Foundational to Health Justice?](#)
- Tobin-Tyler, [Medical-Legal Partnership: A Powerful Tool for Public Health](#)

### **Education Law Readings**

- K. Stewart, [The Connection between Permanency and Education in Child Welfare](#)
- Vivi R. Besteman, [Redefining the Right to Public Education](#)
- Barbara Fedders, [School-Based Legal Services as a Tool in Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline](#)

### **State of Poverty – Legal Framework Readings**

- Victoria Esposito, [A Systemic Reimagining of Poverty Law](#)
- Sarah S. Greene, [A Theory of Poverty: Legal Immobility](#)
- Andrew Hammond, Ariel Jurow Kleiman, & Gabriel Scheffle, [The Future of Anti-Poverty Legislation](#)

<b>Dates (week of)</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
Wednesday, January 21 (Monday Schedule)	Updated Case Management Guidelines / Outreach Structure Introduction.		
January 26	Building Sustainable Change		Discuss projects to help build this semester.
February 2	Guardianship Law	Guardianship Templates & Resources	First assigned Guardianship Cases
February 9	Review Current Outreach / Clinic Structures		
February 16	Criminalization of Poverty	Criminalization Readings.	Wills/POAs cases assigned.
February 23	Case Management / Action Plans		
March 2	Health Law	Health Law Readings.	Second assigned Guardianship cases
March 9	Spring Recess – NO CLASS		
March 16	Structure of Case Memoranda		Wills/POAs cases assigned.
March 23	Education Law	Education Readings.	
March 30	Case Review / Evaluation		
April 6	Legal Landscape – Current Events	Current Legal Landscape Readings.	
April 13	Discuss Status of Cases / Create Final Timelines		
April 20	Poverty Legal Landscape	State of Poverty Legal Issues Readings.	

## 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](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

[Mason Square Clinic](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room B102

703-991-2831

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Disability Services](#)

[Student Conduct](#)

[University Life](#)