

Public Interest Practicum

Fridays, 1 p.m. to 2:50 p.m.

Adjunct Professor Caroline Palmer

caroline@mncasa.org

Work: 651-209-9993 x214

Cell: 612-978-1936

SYLLABUS

Some of the class meetings, except for the orientation on August 21 and the final class on November 20 will include a guest speaker on the assigned topic. There are seven class sessions scheduled intermittently throughout the semester. The goal of the classroom portion of the Public Interest Practicum is to introduce students to different issues and areas in public interest law that will supplement the fieldwork component of the course. This goal will be accomplished through class discussion and readings.

August 21 Orientation to Course

Introductions, discussions of goals, field placements and course review. What is public interest law?

August 28 Who is a Public Interest Lawyer?

How do you develop your personal vision of public interest law? Discussion includes an overview of the history of legal aid in the United States and Minnesota. What do the Minnesota legal services and pro bono communities look like today?

Guest Speaker:

Steve Hirsh, Access to Justice Director, Minnesota State Bar Association

Required Reading (all materials on reserve in library):

National Center on Poverty Law, *Legal Aid History* by Alan Houseman

National Center on Poverty Law, *Representing the Whole Client* by Ellen Hemley

National Center on Poverty Law, *Vision and Community: Keys to Thriving in Legal Services* by Rosemary French and Marie Contreras

Legal Services Corporation, *Documenting the Justice Gap in America* (www.lsc.gov/justicegap.pdf)

September 4 Has the Time Come for Civil Gideon?

Should clients in certain civil cases (involving shelter, basic security and family rights) have an attorney appointed if they cannot otherwise afford one? What are some of the historical, financial and policy bases for a right to counsel in the criminal context, and should the right extend to the civil context? We will listen to recordings of oral arguments from *In the Matter of the Marriage of King v. King* and *Office of Public Advocacy vs. Alaska Court System*, two recent Civil Gideon appellate cases.

Required Reading:

Mary Deutsch Schneider, *Trumpeting Civil Gideon: An Idea Whose Time Has Come?*,
Bench & Bar of Minnesota

<http://www2.mnbar.org/benchandbar/2006/apr06/gideon.htm>

King v. King, 174 P.3d 659, 162 Wn.2d 378 (Wash., 2007)

In the Interest of J.C., A Child, Petition for Writ of Certiorari to the Supreme Court of the
United States (*on reserve in library or available by email from instructor*)

September 11 The Role of the Public Interest Lawyer in Legislative Change

Examine and discuss the role of the public interest lawyer in legislative advocacy by
discussing examples of issues raised during the 2009 session of the Minnesota state
legislature. How does a bill become law in Minnesota? As an example, we'll follow the
path of a bill designed to update and enhance the state's human trafficking law.

Guest Speaker:

Mary C. Ellison, The Advocates for Human Rights

Required Reading:

Session Law Chapter 137 (find at www.leg.state.mn.us)

Read at least executive summaries and review as much as possible:

The Advocates for Human Rights, *Sex Trafficking Needs Assessment for the State of
Minnesota* (2008) (find at www.mnadvocates.org)

Office of Justice Programs, *Human Trafficking in Minnesota: A Report to the Minnesota
Legislature* (2008) (find at www.dps.state.mn.us)

October 2 The Lawyer's Responsibility to Perform Pro Bono

How does pro bono work meet the community need for legal services? Should pro bono
service be voluntary or mandatory? Is a pro bono a professional obligation?

Guest Speaker:

To Be Announced

Required Reading:

Judge Jay Quam, *Judging Without Lawyers: Not Knowing Makes for Nightmares*, Bench
& Bar of Minnesota, May/June 2009

<http://www2.mnbar.org/benchandbar/2009/mj09/judging.html>

Minnesota Rules of Professional Conduct 6.1 and commentary (find at www.courts.state.mn.us)

October 9 Understanding Nonprofit Law

Many public interest lawyers need to have at least a working knowledge of nonprofit law including lobbying rules, employment law, working with boards of directors, and much more. Whether you're running a nonprofit organization, serving on the board, or working on staff, there are many issues you will need to know. We'll spend this class period going over the basics.

Required Reading:

Go to http://www.mncn.org/info/principles_and_practices.pdf and review "Principles and Practices for Nonprofit Excellence: A Guide for Nonprofit Board Members, Managers and Staff," published by the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (copy also available on reserve in the library).

November 20 Reflections on Field Placement

Discussion and wrap-up of field placements. Each student should be prepared to give a ten minute presentation summarizing his or her work over the semester. The summary should include reflections from your experience such as examples of effective advocacy, strong leadership, a unique challenge, and something you thought you could have handled better. Has your vision of yourself as a public interest lawyer changed? What have you learned about your community during your placement? What surprised you about the experience? Which class speaker made the most memorable impression on you, and why?

Computer Use

Laptop computers are permitted so long as use is related to the class activity. The instructor reserves the right to change this policy if laptop access is abused.

Class Attendance Policy

Since the classroom portion of the Practicum is limited to only seven (7) meetings, students may have only one absence from the class during the semester. Please contact the instructor with any questions about this policy.

Grading

The Practicum grade is pass/no pass and based overall on the student's completion of the fieldwork and required assignments, as well as attendance in the class sessions.