

## **Public Interest Practicum**

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

Law School 301

Adjunct Professor Caroline Palmer

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## **SYLLABUS**

*Some of the class meetings, except for the orientation on August 21 and the final class on November 13, 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      Has the Time Come for Civil Gideon?**

Should clients in certain civil cases (involving shelter, 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, and should the right extend to the civil context?

*Required Reading:*

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

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

Justice Earl Johnson, *Will Gideon's Trumpet Sound a New Melody? The Globalization of Constitutional Values and Its Implications for a Right to Equal Justice in Civil Cases*, 2 Seattle J. Soc. Just. 201 (2004).

### **September 4      Who is a Public Interest Lawyer?**

Developing a personal vision of public interest law and some of history of legal services in the United States and in Minnesota. What does the Minnesota legal services and pro bono community look like today? What is the lawyer's responsibility to provide pro bono legal representation?

*Guest Speaker:*

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

*Required Reading:*

National Center for Poverty Law, *Poverty Law Manual for the New Lawyer* – read *Vision and Community: Keys to Thriving in Legal Services* by Rosemary French and Marie Contreras; *Legal Aid History* by Alan Houseman; *Representing the Whole Client* by Ellen Hemley; *Cross-Substantive Representation* by Shari Zimble; and *Experienced Advocates Share Insights on Legal Services Practice* (on reserve)

**October 2      The Role of the Public Interest Lawyer: Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence**

Examine the work of a public interest lawyer in the areas of domestic violence and sexual violence and the relationship of these issues to other areas of law, specifically family law.

*Required Reading:*

Selections from Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault *Legal Advocacy Manual* and fact sheets (on reserve)

Review Chapter 518B, Minnesota Statutes (Domestic Violence Act)

*Tool for Attorneys to Screen for Domestic Violence* (on reserve)

*Power and Control Wheel* (Domestic Abuse Intervention Project) (on reserve)

**October 9      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 2008 session of the Minnesota state legislature.

*Guest speaker:*

Melinda Hugdahl, Staff Attorney, Minnesota Legal Services Coalition

*Required Reading:*

To be determined

**November 6    The Work of a Public Interest Lawyer: Civil Liberties**

Examine the work of a public interest lawyer in the area of defending civil liberties.

*Guest speaker:*

Teresa Nelson, Staff Attorney, Minnesota Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union

*Required Reading:*

To be determined

**November 13 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.

*Class Attendance Policy*

Since the classroom portion of the Practicum is limited to only seven 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.