**Veterans and Servicemembers Legal Clinic**

**Judy Clausen, Visiting Associate Professor of Law, Supervising Attorney, Veterans and Servicemembers Legal Clinic**

Course Number: 6940-23422

Credit Hours: 6 credits

Office Location: 105K (in the clinical offices)

Office Phone: (352) 273-0631

Email: jclausen@law.ufl.edu

Class Schedule: Mondays 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Class Location: BG-CL

Office Hours: Mondays, 10:00 AM-12:30 PM and Wednesdays 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM, and telephonic office hours (904) 412-5999 Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM

**Course Communications:**

Students should feel free to email, call, or visit my office.

**Required Course Materials:**

*Veterans Benefits Manual* 2018-2019 edition and 2018-2019 supplement, published by LEXIS-NEXIS, produced by National Veterans Legal Services Program, edited by Barton Stichman, Ronald Abrams, Amy Odom, and Richard Spataro.

Other materials distributed in class and posted on TWEN.

**Course Description:**

The Veterans and Servicemembers Legal Clinic offers students an opportunity to develop essential lawyering skills while serving military veterans on a pro bono basis. Primarily, supervised students assist in representing veterans in appeals to the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. Students may also prepare legal memoranda for judge advocates, deliver Know Your Rights presentations to veterans, and assist in representing veterans in: advance healthcare planning, basic estate planning, claims and appeals within the Department of Veterans Affairs, discharge upgrades, guardianship, landlord-tenant, and consumer law matters. Depending on the needs of the clients, students may: (1) write appellate briefs, objective and persuasive legal memoranda, demand letters, and letters and emails to clients, witnesses, medical experts, and opposing counsel, (2) draft wills, advance directives, guardianship documents, and representation agreements, (3) interview clients, material witnesses, and medical experts, (4) attend hearings, and (5) assist in negotiating settlements on behalf of clients.

**Course Purpose and Learning Outcomes:**

Through classroom instruction, simulation exercises, and supervised Clinic work for clients, students will learn about veterans disability compensation law. Moreover, this Clinic will help students learn how to:

* advocate for clients before appellate courts,
* draft appellate briefs and briefs before administrative review boards,
* develop evidence to present before administrative review boards,
* interview and counsel clients,
* assist clients in basic estate planning and advance healthcare planning,
* draft wills and advance directives,
* write persuasively on behalf of clients,
* prepare client letters and emails,
* work with expert witnesses and other material witnesses,
* navigate ethical issues,
* organize and maintain client files,
* orally present to groups,
* research and analyze statutes, administrative regulations, and case law,
* evaluate clients’ needs and identify potential solutions,
* negotiate settlements, and
* collaborate with other attorneys.

**Grading:**

The Clinic is pass/fail. I evaluate students like I would first year attorneys.

**Grading Scale:**

Grade Points Grade Points Grade Points

A (Excellent) 4.0 C+ 2.33 D- 0.67

A- 3.67 C (Satisfactory) 2.00 E (Failure) 0.0

B+ 3.33 C- 1.67

B (Good) 3.00 D+ 1.33

B- 2.67 D (Poor) 1.00

Although the Clinic is pass/fail, I include the grading scale as required by University policy.

**Student Course Evaluations:**

Students can provide feedback on the quality of instruction in the Clinic by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester. Students will receive notice of the specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

**Class Attendance:**

Attendance is mandatory. Students who must be absent should notify me ahead of time. Excused absences are consistent with University policies (https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx) and require appropriate documentation. Although the Clinic does not have a final exam, the University policy is that I provide the following exam-delay policy:

<http://www.law.ufl.edu/student-affairs/current-students/academic-policies#12>.

**University Honesty Policy:**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code

(https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, students are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel.

**Health and Wellness:**

*U Matter, We Care:*

Students who are in distress or know other students who are in distress should contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

*Counseling and Wellness Center:*

http:www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx, 352-392-1575, and the University Police Department: 352-392-1111, or 911 for emergencies.

*Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)*

Sexual Health Care Center, 352-392-1161.

*University Police Department*

352-392-1111, or 911 for emergencies.

http://www.police.ufl.edu/

**Use of Electronic Devices:**

Students should bring laptops to the Clinic when working on client matters. During weekly seminar sessions, students should use laptops only to take class notes. Using laptops inappropriately during seminar sessions is prohibited.

Students should turn off and refrain from using cell phones during seminar sessions, status conferences, supervision sessions, client conference calls and meetings, and other client events.

**Professionalism, Punctuality, Preparation, and Participation:**

Students should prepare for and actively participate in seminar sessions, status conferences, individual supervision sessions, client conference calls and meetings, and other Clinic events. Preparedness and active participation are key to success in the Clinic. Tardiness to seminar sessions, status conferences, supervision sessions, client conference calls and meetings, and other Clinic events is unprofessional. Most importantly, punctuality, professionalism, preparedness, and active engagement are key to effective client representation.

**Workload Expectations:**

There will be a classroom session on Mondays from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Expect to work an average of 16 to 18 hours per week on Clinic work.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Office of the Dean of Students ([http](file:///%5C%5Cad.fcsl.edu%5Cfiles%5Chome%5CJClausen%5CObjective%20Legal%20Writing%20University%20of%20Florida%5Chttp)[://](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)[www](http://www)[.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)). The Office of the Dean of Students will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the law school’s Office of the Dean of Student Affairs. Students must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments. Accommodations are not retroactive. Therefore, students should make arrangements as soon as possible in the term for which they seek accommodations.

**Course Website and Email Communication:**

Students should visit TWEN to receive posted course materials. Students are responsible for obtaining posted information. I will also email important information. For example, students may learn through an email that I have changed the reading for a particular class, posted materials on TWEN, or responded to commonly asked questions. Students should check email at least twice a day.

**Classroom Component of Clinic**

Students should consult the Schedule of Assignments posted on TWEN for the assigned readings and an outline of topics to be explored in weekly seminar sessions. Seminar instruction is designed to aid students in Clinic work. Therefore, the Schedule of Assignments is a fluid document and is only a rough outline. I will provide advance notice of changes.