

University of Florida Levin College of Law

COURSE SYLLABUS: SEMESTER IN PRACTICE / BRIDGE TO PRACTICE

LAW 6945/6933 (25437/25441)

Spring 2024

INSTRUCTOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:30 pm. If this time does not work for you, please contact me to set up a meeting at another time or drop by my office. Students should feel free to contact me anytime to discuss legal issues or ask questions about their cases. You are welcome to contact me via email, text, or phone.

CLASS DATES AND TIMES: via Zoom

- Tuesday, February 6th, 6-8 pm
- Tuesday, March 5th, 6-8 pm - *Student Presentations (Group A)*
- Tuesday, April 9th, 6-8 pm - *Student Presentations (Group B)*

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

Welcome! This course is the classroom component for UF Law students enrolled in a Semester in Practice externship for academic credit. This course will be an opportunity for you to learn the substantive law and norms of law practice while reflecting on the ethical situations you encounter in your field placements. You will reflect on your experiences and analyze the issues you encounter on the job, incorporating your new skills into class discussions and presentations. I am here to support you in this learning endeavor and always welcome your questions.

Course goals include teaching you to:

- Reflect on your professional experiences at your externship;
- Expand your understanding of your own professional identity and explore other professionalism topics;
- Learn how to address challenges at your field placement and how to deepen your field placement experiences through self-directed learning, self-assessment, and supervisor feedback;
- Hone your skills at identifying, examining, and reflecting on the role and impact of racism, bias, discrimination, power, and privilege in your placements, the legal system, and the broader legal community; and
- Examine the settings in which you are working and the types of lawyering you see to be able to make more informed choices about your career.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

- Conduct accurate legal research and write professional quality legal memoranda;
- Collaborate with classmates and colleagues to explore and resolve legal issues;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the life of a case;
- Conduct successful interviews with clients and witnesses;
- Communicate effectively with judges, clerks, and court staff;
- Negotiate with opposing counsel in the spirit of a just resolution of cases;
- Navigate ethical issues and develop the skills to think like a leader;
- Recognize inequities (race, gender, social class, etc.) and disparate outcomes, learning how to sensitively address and challenge them;
- Reflect on and discuss how ethics rules and cases promote or impair just results; and
- Develop or refine a professional identity that reflects the core values of the legal profession and embraces ethical problem-solving.

REQUIRED READING MATERIALS:

- ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct: https://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/publications/model_rules_of_professional_conduct/model_rules_of_professional_conduct_table_of_contents/ Links to an external site.
- The Seven Stages of a Field Placement (in Canvas under “files”)
- A BigLaw Partner’s Journey Through Clinical Depression: <https://www.abajournal.com/voice/article/a-big-law-partners-journey-through-clinical-depression> Links to an external site.
- Judicial Wellness: The Ups and Downs of Sitting NY Judges (in Canvas under “files”)
- Four Things Resilient Lawyers Do Differently: <https://www.lawpracticetoday.org/article/four-things-resilient/> Links to an external site.
- Mistakes Aren’t the Problem, Law’s Blame Culture Is: <https://www.law.com/international-edition/2021/05/11/mistakes-arent-the-problem-blame-culture-is/> Links to an external site.
- <https://cohcwcovidsupport.org/moral-distress> Links to an external site.
- Virtues and the Lawyer: <https://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2414&context=tcl> Links to an external site.
- My Father’s Life Was Shaped by Racism. So Was His Death (in Canvas under “files”)
- Why Young Bankers, Lawyers, and Consultants Need Emotional Intelligence (in Canvas under “files”)

Additional materials may be posted on Canvas throughout the semester.

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS AND INFORMATION ON GRADING:

This course is graded pass/fail (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) and follows the grading policies at the Levin College of Law. To achieve a satisfactory grade, students must attend each of our classes and complete all reading and writing assignments, as well as successfully deliver a presentation at one of our final class meetings. The minimum expectations are that students will:

- Work the agreed-upon number of hours (45 hours of work equals 1 credit);

- Complete their timesheets and other written work by the due dates—students who are more than one week late without prior notice with more than three assignments risk not receiving academic credit for their placements;
- Perform work of a satisfactory quality as deemed by the supervising attorney and the professor; and
- Behave in an ethical and professional manner in connection with their academic and professional assignments in the placement.

Failure to abide by the above may result in some or all credit being denied.

COURSE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Every two (2) weeks, you will be required to upload a journal assignment to Canvas. The ABA and best practices require field placements to have a reflective component. This semester, you will be assigned seven reflective writing prompts. These prompts are intended to provide an opportunity for you to take a step back and learn something new and different about the legal profession, your placement, and yourself. You are encouraged to use these prompts as a jumping-off point; if there is another topic/issue that interests you and that you want to write about, please do. If you want to discuss your current placement in relation to your past summer employment, your last placement, or prior work experience, please do so. These entries should be between 250-500 words, or 1-2 pages double-spaced. Memos are due on Sundays by midnight.

Each student will deliver one presentation to the class on a substantive professional responsibility or criminal justice topic of your choice that relates to your experience at your placement. The presentations should be 10 minutes in length (which includes time for questions and discussion). The presentation will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- **Organization.** Is the presentation well organized, providing convincing evidence to support its conclusion?
- **Content.** Does the student present accurate and engaging content, and are the listeners likely to gain new insights about the topic?
- **Delivery.** Does the student appear comfortable, speak without undue reliance on notes, and interact effectively with listeners?

Students may utilize technology (e.g., PowerPoint) if they wish, but it is not required. Presentations will be delivered on our final two nights of class, March 5th (Group A) and April 9th (Group B).

1. January 21, 2024

Read:

- The Seven Stages of a Field Placement (in Canvas under “files”)

Upload to Canvas:

- Supervisor’s and Student’s Externship Agreement (MOU)

- Reflective Memo #1. Prompt: Use this entry to introduce me to your placement, describe what you are currently doing and what you hope to do before the semester's end, and why you chose this placement. You are encouraged to provide some background on why you came to law school, what you hope to do after, and how this placement fits into your path. What are you looking forward to, and what challenges do you see potentially arising this semester? In this journal entry, I am hoping to get to know you a little better.
- Professional Development Plan (PDP). Using the "PDP Externship" outline found in the "files" section of Canvas, write your goals for this externship. This is an extremely helpful exercise. Be sure to review your goals with your supervisor.

2. February 4, 2024

Read:

- Judicial Wellness: The Ups and Downs of Sitting New York Judges
- A BigLaw Partner's Journey Through Clinical Depression Interactive (in Canvas under "files")

Upload to Canvas:

- Reflective Memo #2. Meditation doesn't mean you have to sit in a lotus position; prayer doesn't require clasping your hands together. What activities help you relax and clear your mind? When are you most able to focus on one thing and shut everything else out? Are there activities you enjoyed in the past that you stopped doing as a law student? When you feel stressed, what calms you? What aspects of your field placement cause (or seem likely to cause) you stress or anxiety? The readings focus on judges and BigLaw attorneys. How do those lessons apply to you and your chosen practice area or criminal law field placement?

3. February 18, 2024

Read:

- [Four Things Resilient Lawyers do Differently Links to an external site.](#)
- [Mistakes Aren't the Problem, Law's Blame Culture Is Links to an external site.](#)

Upload to Canvas:

- Reflective Memo #3. Please reflect on mistakes you've made in law school or in your current or a previous work setting. Which mistakes did you handle well, and how do those differ from mistakes you could have handled better? Has anyone been instrumental in helping you resolve and learn from mistakes? What aspects of your field placement are you least confident in, and what strategies might help you anticipate mistakes, recognize

and correct them, and learn from them moving forward? Have you observed someone near you making a mistake, and if so, how did you (or could you) help them?

4. March 3, 2024

Read:

- [Moral Distress Links to an external site.](#)

Upload to Canvas:

- Reflective Memo #4. The reading uses the terms “moral injury/distress” and “moral residue” in the context of healthcare providers to describe the effect of being unable to act or prevented from acting in accordance with one’s values, beliefs, and moral outlook. Please reflect on situations in which you have experienced moral distress or situations you anticipate facing moral distress in your field placement or practice. Does the “4As” model resonate with you? Is there another approach that might help you mitigate moral injury, thereby reducing moral residue in your practice?
- Student Mid-term Self-Assessment

5. March 17, 2024

Read:

- [Virtues and the Lawyer Links to an external site.](#)

Upload to Canvas:

- Reflective Memo #5. The reading suggests a return to the noble “lawyer-statesman” and “wise counselor” ideals. Who do you know who embodies (or inspires you to be) a “lawyer-statesman” or “wise counselor”? What do they do that differentiates them from others in similar roles? What have you done, and what can you do to emulate their example?

6. March 31, 2024

Read:

- My Father's Life Was Shaped by Racism. So Was His Death. (in Canvas under “files”)

Upload to Canvas:

- Reflective Memo #6. The author shares her personal story to illustrate the ways in which our legal system “redacts and desecrates Black and brown lives.” What injustices, redactions, or desecrations are salient in your own life? Do you see people around you who are trying to fix broken systems? There are many different ways to address systemic problems—can you identify people in your life who are fighting racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, transphobia, and other forms of injustice in markedly different ways? Look around your placement. How does your placement address or not address issues around racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, transphobia, and other forms of injustice? Do they have official statements or unofficial practices? You are welcome to write in-depth about a particular kind of injustice or address the issue of “difference” generally that you see at your placement, in the area of law in which you work, or in the legal profession as a whole. If you were creating the rules/practices at your placement, what would you do?

7. April 14, 2024

Read:

- Why Young Bankers, Lawyers, and Consultants Need Emotional Intelligence (in Canvas under “files”)

Upload to Canvas:

- The reading discusses emotional intelligence in the workplace as consisting of three parts: your relationship with yourself, your relationships with your colleagues, and your relationships with your clients. Drawing upon this reading and any of the prior readings and discussions this semester, please reflect on what kind of lawyer you aspire to be and how your field placement has affected that vision.

SITE VISITS:

During the semester, the Director of Externships conducts virtual/in-person site visits to many of the externships to meet with supervising attorneys. If I plan to visit your placement, I will make a concerted effort to inform you of the visit.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING WEEKLY TIMESHEETS:

Please complete weekly time sheets which accurately describe work performed in a meaningful way. Please do not record time with a single, recurring description: “Work on a motion to suppress evidence.” Instead, break down the tasks involved:

“research law on standing—2 hours”

“research law on stop and frisk—three hours”

“begin draft memorandum for attorney—2 hours”

Also, think carefully about the words you use to describe your work. Use persuasive verbs. "Motion to suppress brief" is not persuasive; "Researched, wrote, and revised motion to suppress brief" is persuasive. No matter what area of law practice you enter, being able to accurately and persuasively describe your work has tremendous value, and this semester is a great time to hone these skills!

Feel free to use a timesheet provided by your organization if it has one. If not, the timesheet you are to use will be provided and should be completed each week, signed by you and your supervising attorney, and sent to externships@law.ufl.edu. Original signatures are required unless you are working remotely. Please remember that you do not get credit for hours worked while you are on a lunch break, but we do understand that you may participate in a working lunch, and if so, please log those hours.

CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Classes are mandatory and will be held on Zoom on the days/times listed in this Syllabus. If you are unable to attend, please provide me with advance notice (or subsequent notice of an unanticipated emergency). If you miss class, you will be required to complete an alternate asynchronous assignment.

Students are expected to attend each class and submit written work by the due dates in accordance with the law school policy. Students who miss a class session without my approval, who do not participate meaningfully in class discussions, who are late without prior notice on the written assignments, or who do a superficial job on the written assignments risk not receiving academic credit for their coursework. Students will be instructed to submit most externship assignments on Canvas.

This class is designed to create a unique experience for each student. It is not a lecture format based on case law. Rather, I expect students to actively engage in exercises, readings, and class discussions to reflect on their field placements, their career paths/professional identity, and on professionalism. Please make sure that you are actively participating in class. It will enrich all of our experience if everyone is cognizant of their own participation. The law school's policy on attendance can be found at this link: <https://www.law.ufl.edu/life-at-uf-law/office-of-student-affairs/current-students/uf-law-student-handbook-and-academic-policies#>

UF LEVIN COLLEGE OF LAW STANDARD SYLLABUS POLICIES:

Other information about UF Levin College of Law policies, including compliance with the UF Honor Code, Grading, Accommodations, Class Recordings, and Course Evaluations, can be found at this link: <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/427635/files/74674656?wrap=1>

ABA OUT-OF-CLASS HOURS REQUIREMENTS:

ABA Standard 310 requires that students devote 120 minutes to out-of-class preparation for every "classroom hour" of in-class instruction. Our class time is approximately two hours, requiring at least four hours of preparation outside of class, including reading the assigned materials, completing written assignments, and submitting your bi-weekly reflections. Articles and viewing materials relating to current events will be added to your assignments periodically throughout the semester.

COMMUNICATION COURTESY AND CIVILITY:

Please follow the rules of common courtesy in all email messages and class discussions. Turn off your cell phone during class. I reserve the right to lower your final grade if you engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment for your classmates.

INTERNET USE DURING CLASS:

Use of the Internet during class is not permitted unless directed by me. You may not check social media sites, email (even clinic- or career-related emails), or news sites. Consider class a vital client meeting, and schedule your emailing needs accordingly. Your internet use, even for a noble purpose, violates the standards of professionalism. If you have concerns about this policy, please discuss them with me.