

ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF LAW



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CLINICS & EXTERNSHIPS

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CLINICAL DIRECTOR

Three years of study at St. Thomas College of Law is a purposefully transformative experience. Beyond completing the required curriculum, each student charts a unique path by selecting elective credits, seminars, and “experiential” courses that match their interests.

A significant payoff for that classroom work comes in our sought-after Clinical and Externship courses, where upper-level students truly become advocates as they receive academic credit to represent real clients in all aspects of their legal matters, from intake to trial. In a model of “learning by doing,” students leave the classroom for the courtroom, shouldering the responsibilities for life-altering legal outcomes under the guidance of dedicated clinical faculty members.

The Immigration, Tax, and Appellate Advocacy Clinics are based on campus, where each “clinic” works as an autonomous law office. The respective faculty directors teach the courses’ seminar components, facilitate case supervision meetings and lead moot court practice sessions, all in preparation for students’ major case events. The “externships” balance an on-campus seminar component with “field placements” throughout South Florida and beyond, with assigned mentor-supervisors in agencies, government offices, and judicial chambers.

Clinics and Externships are their own special place of magic, where – by definition and design – students expand their base of experiences and exceed their perceived potential, (literally) every day. Our expert faculty provide structure, training, and guidance, but it is the St. Thomas students who truly earn all victories, as they give voice to the voiceless and stand up for clients in their pursuit of justice.

Thus, appropriately, the following pages feature the words and deeds of your predecessors, who give a glimpse into what adventures await when it is your turn to represent. Welcome.

Michael Vastine
Director of Clinical Programs

APPELLATE LITIGATION CLINIC



The Appellate Litigation Clinic is a year-long clinic that provides students the unique opportunity to handle an appeal from beginning to end. First, students review the trial court record, formulate the issues, conduct research, and draft the briefs for the cases. Students then prepare for their oral arguments and argue the case before a three-judge panel.

Each student will work on two cases with a partner. Students typically file briefs in the Fall semester and argue each case in the Spring.



"The Appellate Litigation Clinic allowed me to apply what I learned in my doctrinal classes to actual criminal appellate filings. The cases honed my legal research, writing, and advocacy skills. The excitement and responsibility of representing a live client was incredible. It made me understand the importance of a lawyer's role in someone's life. I know I will carry forward the skills that I developed in the clinic to my clients once I graduate."

-Livan Davidson

BANKRUPTCY EXTERNSHIP

The Bankruptcy Externship is a single-semester externship that offers a comprehensive set of legal services focused on assisting and empowering low-income individuals in their interaction with the bankruptcy system.



"I participated in the Bankruptcy Externship in my Spring Semester. In this externship, I was able to experience the procedural and substantive aspects of Bankruptcy. I was able to take part in and attend a Bankruptcy seminar, attend a Chapter 341 meeting, attend a Chapter 13 Calendar and prepare and submit documentation under Chapter 7 for the clients assigned to me. The highlight of this experience was being able to help individuals through this process and understand the impact of this work on their life and the fulfillment it gave me. I plan to use the skills and training I received in my future endeavors."

-Ivana D. Romero



CIVIL PRACTICE EXTERNSHIP



The Civil Practice Externship provides an opportunity for students to observe and participate in lawyering at government agencies and non-profit, public interest settings. Typical placements include legal aid services, city attorney or county attorney offices, state and local government agencies, school boards, and healthcare facilities.



"I participated in a Civil Practice Externship with the Office of the City Attorney for The City of North Miami. Through this externship, I was able to gain experience in the area of local government and in many practice areas, such as land use and development, government contracting and procurement, public records, sunshine law, and ethics. . The environment was honest, supportive, and respectful and has birthed in me a desire to work in a setting that has a significant impact on public policy and quality of life within the community."

-PaulMarie E. Bobb

CRIMINAL PRACTICE EXTERNSHIP

The Criminal Practice Externship provides an intense exposure to actual trial experience and motion practice. Students assigned to the State Attorney's Office experience representing the State of Florida in criminal prosecutions.

Students assigned to the Public Defender's office represent indigent adults and minors charged with felonies and misdemeanor crimes. Issues often involve the legality of searches and seizures, identification procedures, or confessions, along with defenses of insufficient evidence, mistaken identity, alibi, entrapment, or self-defense.



"My experience as a Certified Legal Intern for the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office was incredible. I was surrounded by brilliant attorneys handling cases in County Court and the Felony Division in Circuit Court. Everyone was helpful, dedicated, and willing to teach. However, the highlight of my externship was getting to argue my first response to a motion to suppress in front of a judge, a motion which I also got to write on my own. Most importantly, the court granted the motion in my favor. It was an experience like no other, where I realized I could be in the profession. From drafting and arguing motions to screening jurors, getting to try a case, as second chair, it was one of the most remarkable and memorable experiences while being a law student."

-Andres Duran

ELDER LAW EXTERNSHIP



Students in the Elder Law Externship represent elderly persons in their legal conflicts and end of life issues, learning the practice area and engaging in its distinct ethical and practical challenges.

Students work on income maintenance, health care, long-term care, competency, guardianship, and probate.



"The Guardianship program of Dade County exposed me to a practice area I had not considered. The attorneys were very welcoming and compassionate towards their clients. They were always available to answer any questions I may have had. During my time there, I attended "Do Not Resuscitate" ("DNR") and Incapacity hearings as well as e-file important court documents daily. I applied everything I had learned in my Guardianship and Elder law classes to Probate Court. I witnessed firsthand the compassion and seriousness with which these Judges approach the hearings. Their decisions often come with a heavy heart in each of the DNR hearings. Moreover, the judges handle the hearings with great compassion and devotion to each individual in every case. I highly recommend anyone who has an interest in probate to sign up for this externship. I enjoyed every moment of it."

- Roberto Garrote

FLORIDA SUPREME COURT INTERNSHIP

During the Florida Supreme Court Internship, the intern functions as a law clerk to an individual Justice or as a central staff law clerk working for all of the Justices. Duties include reviewing and making recommendations on petitions for discretionary review, attorney disciplinary matters, and extraordinary writ petitions, and conducting legal research and preparing memoranda for cases pending before the Court.



"There is nothing like being able to walk into the Florida Supreme Court on a daily basis and engage in the operations of the Court. During my time with Justice John D. Couriel, I primarily worked on writing determinations of jurisdiction (DOJ) memos, vote recommendation memos, and other semester-long projects that required extensive research that will be used by the Court in the future. I was able to read cases ranging all across the legal spectrum which challenged me to learn about different areas of the law. Being able to work so closely with the Justice and the clerks, I have been able to incorporate their suggestions in my writing and better present arguments in the most clear and effective manner. Additionally, there is no better way to learn than by working for some of the brightest legal minds in our country."

-Nicholas Bastidas

IMMIGRATION CLINIC



This is a year-long clinic available to second and third-year law students designed to develop the technical legal expertise and the case development and trial skills needed to provide impactful representation to immigrants.

Students represent asylum seekers, battered spouses and children, immigrant detainees, and non-citizens seeking relief from deportation in litigation before the Immigration Court.



"I emigrated to this country as a fifteen-year-old daughter of a single mother. That journey awoke in me a desire to advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves. As an Immigration Clinic student, my partner and I have filed an Asylum claim, a Petition for Alien Relative (Family-based application), drafted a Bond Motion and other court documents, and represented clients in Immigration Court. I learned to develop a successful attorney-client relationship that is built on trust. I witnessed one of our clients transform from an extremely cautious and impenetrable individual, into a trusting ally. The clinical programs provide students with the skills, real-world experience, and confidence necessary to become the best lawyers and advocates that they can be. Being in the Immigration Clinic has without question been one of the most impactful experiences of my life, both as a student and as an individual."

JUDICIAL INTERNSHIP

This is a single-semester internship that provides experience within the judicial system. Students learn about judicial decision-making and use their analytical, research, and writing skills to draft opinions and memoranda for pending matters under the direct supervision of judges, their law clerks, and staff attorneys.



"The Judicial Externship experience allowed me to learn firsthand the kind of lawyer I aspire to be. I had the honor to intern for District Court Judge Marcia Cooke of the Southern District of Florida. During the internship, I had the chance to watch Zoom hearings, where I saw incredibly talented attorneys zealously advocate for their clients. Not only was I able to witness the importance of upholding the integrity of the law and the judicial system, but watching the proceedings made me realize what an incredible impact a lawyer and a judge can have on the life of a criminal defendant and the community at large. Additionally, I improved my research and writing skills by reviewing court dockets and drafting orders (one of which I used as a writing sample). I also learned what clerks and judges look for in pleadings/motions and how to make effective, concise legal arguments. The Judicial Externship was by far the most incredible experience of my law school career, and I am so grateful for all the advice, support, and guidance I received from Judge Cooke and her clerks. I would highly encourage any law student to participate in a Judicial Externship."

-Christine Benavente



This clinic gives students the opportunity to work with underserved communities and, under supervision, represent low-income clients involved in tax controversies before the IRS, the IRS Counsel, and the U.S. Tax Court.

Students perform outreach services by providing education on the rights and responsibilities of U.S. taxpayers to the community particularly those for whom English is a second language. Students are encouraged to attend Tax Court sessions.

"Working in the STU Law Low-Income Tax Clinic has given me a realistic look into the daily work of a tax attorney. Not only have I learned how to think on my feet, complete tasks more quickly, and attack various tax issues from different angles, but I've also learned that being an attorney extends beyond merely being an advocate for your clients. It's being an emotional counselor to your clients before you can become a legal one. It's knowing how to shift your perspective in order to anticipate your opponent's next move. It's knowing the law better than anyone else. And it really is having the ability to break down legal jargon so your clients can understand the process. I honestly believe that advancing through a legal curriculum is only one small aspect of a quality law school experience. Practical legal experience like that offered through the clinical program is both exhilarating and necessary."

- Jaime Noicely

UNITED NATIONS INTERNSHIP

Located at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City, the United Nations Internship is a residential, single-semester placement at Permanent Missions, inter-governmental organizations (IGO's), and non-governmental organizational (NGO's) credentialed to the United Nations.



"As an intern for the UN, I attended meetings on behalf of the Sovereign Order of Malta, an 11th-century Catholic humanitarian organization dedicated to providing support to the forgotten, vulnerable and marginalized members of society. My short time at the UN deepened my knowledge about the intricacies of its structure and also exposed me to things I wouldn't have witnessed from the classroom. Because the U.N. is so multicultural, I had the pleasure of meeting individuals from all over the world who exposed me to ideas and worldviews that were foreign to me before. I truly enjoyed my time with the Order, and I highly recommend it to those interested in international law."

-Sabryna Raymond

ST. THOMAS LAW LEGAL CLINICS, EXTERNSHIPS, AND INTERNSHIPS

St. Thomas University College of Law is committed to training students to be effective, ethical advocates and to instill in them a devotion to justice and a desire to provide legal services to underserved communities. As part of this commitment, the law school offers ten clinical/externship courses with a wide variety of placements.

The educational objectives of the Clinical Program at St. Thomas Law are to facilitate opportunities for students to:

- Serve the public,
- Explore career possibilities in various areas of legal practice,
- Gain first-hand insight into the strategic and ethical dimensions of the profession, and
- Acquire valuable legal skills in a supportive educational environment.





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