



# Experiential Learning

Clinic and Externship Programs

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# A Message from the Assistant Dean of Experiential Learning

*Experience Matters!* At St. Thomas University College of Law, we have developed a program intended to ignite profound growth within each student. Rooted in our Catholic intellectual tradition—an education based on values that promote academic excellence and social justice advocacy—our legal experiential learning opportunities serve as cornerstone to our commitment to nurturing skilled legal professionals, who are compassionate advocates and ethical leaders in every station they serve.

From clinical placements that serve marginalized communities to externships that advocate for the dignity of every human being, our programs embody excellence and the spirit of service, compassion, and social responsibility. Located on campus, the Immigration, Tax and Appellate Advocacy Clinics each function as independent law offices. Students represent real clients in every stage of their cases, from the initial interview to trial, and appeal. Their professor, in addition to leading the course component, supervises cases and facilitates case supervision meetings as well as moot court sessions in preparation for major case events. Similarly, our externship opportunities include a seminar class component, where students receive individualized guidance from a faculty member, who is also a practicing attorney, a judge, or a specialist in the externship's legal field. Students participate in lawyering through field placement: typically, a city, county, state or local governmental agency, courts, or a not-for-profit legal service organization across South Florida, the U.S. and abroad, under the supervision and mentorship of an experienced attorney or judge.

This booklet provides insight into the experiences and successes of past students, offering a preview of the exciting opportunities awaiting you, as you embark on your journey that will etch your mark into the legal world. Join us in this intellectual quest through learning, discovery, and application—a journey that will empower you to become a proficient legal professional, an agent of positive change, a compassionate leader in your desired field of law.

Welcome to Legal Experiential Learning at the STU Benjamin L. Crump College of Law, where faith, knowledge, and service meet to shape an exceptional kind of legal professional, committed to the quest for truth, justice, dignity and the common good.

**Ana Isabel Vallejo**

Assistant Dean of Experiential Learning

# Appellate Litigation Clinic

The Appellate Litigation Clinic is a year- long clinic in which students have the unique opportunity to prepare and deliver oral arguments on real cases before the Third Court of Appeal.

Each student will work on two cases, beginning with the review of the trial court record for the cases, conducting legal research, drafting and filing briefs, preparing for oral argument, and arguing the case.



If you want to learn the ins and outs of litigating appeals in Miami, join the Appellate Litigation Clinic. Under the active supervision of an experienced appellate attorney, I received one-on-one professional training in the arts of oral and written advocacy.

My classmates and I were assigned a real case at the beginning of the year. We reviewed the record, identified and researched the issues to be raised on appeal, wrote the initial brief, then the reply brief and, if timing permits, we will argue the case in front of Florida's Third District Court of Appeal.



The Appellate Litigation Clinic was the culmination of my legal education. I brought what I learned from my professors and the skills I practiced with Moot Court and Law Review to bear on a real-world problem. I cannot think of a better bridge between education and practice.

- Nicolas Whittaker



My experience in the Bankruptcy Externship was invaluable. I had the opportunity to assist clients facing financial difficulties and determine whether bankruptcy was appropriate. The initial client consultations taught me how to issue-spot in real-world scenarios and what effective client communication looks like. One of the most rewarding yet challenging aspects of the course was communicating the intricacies of the bankruptcy system to clients in a way that was easy for them to understand. As law students, we are immersed in an environment where legal jargon is the norm, and we often need to remember how to speak in plain English. However, the externship emphasized the importance of breaking down these complex legal concepts to clients.



Additionally, I met esteemed bankruptcy professionals and law students from other schools. This externship not only enriched my legal education but also proved to be a valuable asset in securing an internship position with the United States Department of Justice, U.S. Trustee Program.

- Roxana Clemente

## 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.





# 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.



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I worked with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Shelters Division through STU's Civil Practice Externship. I worked primarily on cases regarding the placement of children with foster families.

Doing the Civil Practice Externship has been one of the best experiences I have had while being a law student. I had the ability to attend hearings, meet judges and other attorneys, and learn first-hand how to argue motions. I believe that this experience will be invaluable for my career as an attorney.



One of the things I enjoyed most about my time on the externship was the ability to work closely with the attorneys at DCF. I had the ability to draft motions and assist in trial preparations. These have helped me gain skills that go beyond what I am learning in the classroom, and I am grateful for the opportunity that I have been given.

- Dylan Sanchez



The Criminal Practice Externship was one of the most rewarding experiences of my law school career.

Every morning, I was responsible for appearing before the court to prosecute cases that were temporarily assigned to me. Under the supervision of my lead attorney, I argued motions and completed plea colloquies. I was able to polish my litigation and interpersonal skills. The feedback I received was not only constructive but incredibly helpful.

Litigating beside the attorneys who mentored me was an esteemed honor. It was truly a full-circle experience for me. There were no words to describe how phenomenal this externship was.

- Gabriella DeSabato



## 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.



# 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.



I had the invaluable opportunity to intern with the Miami-Dade Probate Court. The judge I interned with and her amazing team fostered an environment where I was able to learn and grow tremendously in my research, writing, and problem-solving skills. I gained knowledge regarding court room etiquette as I was able to attend various Probate, Guardianship and Mental Health Proceedings.

This opportunity allowed me to have exposure to more challenging Probate and Homestead issues. I gained helpful insight regarding how the Florida Probate Code was applied in these proceedings and attained knowledge while observing the resolutions of trust related litigation. This program was such a rewarding and impactful part of my law school experience.



- Alexis Sanchez





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

## 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.



# 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.



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The Immigration Clinic was one of the most exhilarating and worthwhile experiences in my law school career. I have garnered skills not only applicable to immigration law but to any practice.

I learned how to interview clients, gather evidence, prepare for trial, and argue before an Immigration Judge. I also learned to dissect statutes, how to file motions, applications for relief with the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), and to properly communicate with the court and the U.S. Department of Homeland (DHS).



To be part of this clinic is to see law in action. This was the closest to being a lawyer without being licensed. I had to find balance in my life, stick to deadlines, and put my personal feelings aside to be the best advocate. I entered the clinic not knowing what to expect, but I am leaving with an invaluable experience and unforgettable memories.

- Lauren Azurin



I am honored to have been an intern at the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida with a Magistrate Judge. One of the primary aspects of my role involved conducting extensive legal research on cases before the court. I researched precedent cases, statutes, and legal doctrines to provide comprehensive analysis contributing to the judge's decision-making process. I drafted court orders involving multiple areas of the law and attended court proceedings in different states of litigation, where I observed the day-to-day application of legal principles.



Through this internship, I sharpened my legal research skills, deepened my understanding of the intricacies of federal law, gained a practical understanding of courtroom dynamics and the importance of effective advocacy.

I also expanded my network through interaction with a diverse range of legal professionals, including judges, clerks, and practicing attorneys who provided insights into the legal profession and fostered professional connections.

- Rocio Iglesias Gonzalez

## 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.





# Tax Clinic

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.



The Tax Clinic has enriched my experience profoundly. Working alongside my Professor and fellow clinicians has been an amazing experience. The clinic taught me that understanding the theoretical aspects of a notice of deficiency and the resolution process is one challenge, but effectively conveying this information to a non-U.S. citizen client in their native language, especially when they are in the process of regularizing their immigration status, presents an entirely different set of complexities.



The clinic reaffirmed my mission to advocate for the rights of every taxpayer in their dealings with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The profound satisfaction of achieving favorable settlements resonates deeply with me, rendering my participation in and selection of the tax clinic more personally significant than any academic accomplishment I could have envisioned.

Upon graduation, I will be pursuing a Master of Laws in Taxation (LL.M.), building on the solid foundation I received at STU Law.

- Andreus Donet





It is quite difficult to describe my time with the Sovereign Order of Malta. As an intern for the Order, I attended meetings on their behalf often witnessing speeches given by heads of states about issues affecting the global arena. My short time at the United Nations (UN) deepened my knowledge about the intricacies of its structure and also exposed me to things I wouldn't have witnessed from the classroom. Although at the beginning it felt daunting, Ambassador Rojas ensured that myself and the other interns assimilated smoothly into the UN.



I truly enjoyed my time with the Order, and I highly recommend it for those interested in international law. The experience will give you the opportunity to network while also exploring aspects of international law that you didn't know about before.

- Sabryna Raymond

## 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 nongovernmental organizational (NGO's) credentialed to the United Nations.



# St. Thomas Law Legal Clinics, Externships, and Internships

St. Thomas University Benjamin L. Crump 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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