

Wrongful Convictions Clinic

Fighting for the Unjustly Convicted

The Wrongful Convictions Practicum reviews and investigates the cases of incarcerated men and women who claim that they have been wrongfully or unjustly convicted of major crimes. The Practicum may handle cases of clients who claim factual innocence as well from those who have suffered from procedural unfairness and injustice in the legal process.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In this one-semester, two-credit practicum, students work on the cases of prisoners who claim an unjust result after their conviction at trial or pleading guilty. Most of the Practicum's clients have been convicted of homicide. Each Practicum section (up to eight students) works on a variety of cases. Students assist the instructor with screening new applications from prisoners seeking relief, and aid the instructor in representing one to two incarcerated clients. Over the semester, students could perform case strategy and investigation, as well as drafting and reviewing post-conviction litigation.

Fieldwork

Students spend the first few weeks of the semester reviewing the transcript and case file, including the attorneys' files, pleadings, and judicial decisions, in their entirety. Over the course of the semester, students may meet with clients in-person or virtually via correctional centers throughout eastern Massachusetts, identify and research potential areas of investigation—including forensic testing and witness interviewing—that may result in the discovery of exculpatory information or exonerative evidence, and conduct legal research and analyze the requirements for obtaining a new trial. Students will have the opportunity to attend court hearings.

Coursework

In addition to meeting weekly to discuss case status, students attend a weekly seminar focused on the issues raised by the fieldwork. Students discuss and develop a better understanding of the causes of and potential remedies for the structural and systemic flaws in our criminal



criminal legal system that lead to wrongful and unjust convictions, such as false confessions, mistaken eyewitnesses, faulty forensic evidence and "junk science," the use of jailhouse informants, government misconduct, and ineffective assistance of counsel. Because no two cases will be alike, students have the opportunity to take the Practicum in both the fall and spring semesters and earn a total of four credits.

We warmly welcome all applicants and remind students that Boston University policy prohibits discrimination against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, military service, pregnancy or pregnancy-related condition, or because of marital, parental, or veteran status, and acts in conformity with all

applicable state and federal laws. This policy extends to all BU Law academic programs.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The Practicum gives students a rewarding and fulfilling opportunity to address systemic injustice within the criminal legal system while developing their interviewing and counseling skills, honing their legal research and writing, learning substantive criminal and constitutional law, and developing a habit of keen factual investigation. Each student meets with their client at least once during the semester, and each student team takes responsibility for a particular issue raised in the case, offering students a chance to become deeply knowledgeable about that issue. Students may also have an opportunity to participate in public policy projects related to the criminal legal system.

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