

PI/PS

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INTEREST/
PUBLIC SERVICE LAW AND CAREERS

 **Columbia Law School**

PUBLIC INTEREST/PUBLIC SERVICE CURRICULAR GUIDELINES 2024-2025

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INTRODUCTION

This guide offers a conceptual framework for students interested in pursuing public interest and public service careers as they begin planning a course of study for 2L and 3L year. Its goal is to supplement the Columbia Curriculum Guide, so that students can more deeply assess and select curricular offerings. This guide is intended to be used in consultation with an adviser from the Office of Public Interest/Public Service Law and Careers (PI/PS Office), so that students can select a course of study that provides the knowledge and skills needed for public interest or public service work.

Please be sure to read all the information in this guide carefully before making your course selections. Before you get started, keep in mind the following:

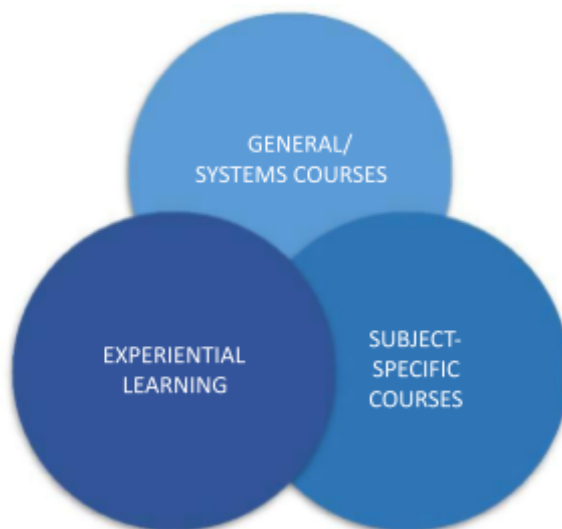
- Students should seek advice from PI/PS advisers and faculty members to devise an academic path that is right for them.
- Classes, clinics, externships, and other opportunities are subject to change based on availability, so students should consult the Curriculum Guide for the most up-to-date information.
- Students should be familiar with Columbia Law School's academic graduation requirements while planning their course of study.
- This document is not an exhaustive list of offerings at the Law School, but instead lays out examples.
- These guidelines do not address the 1L curriculum, which is predetermined and does not offer 1Ls the opportunity to choose courses (except for one elective and a Legal Methods II course). The goal is to provide 1Ls with a uniform year of training in the fundamentals of our legal system, an introduction to lawyering skills, and a solid foundation for their 2L and 3L years.

Course Offerings

In general, the academic options at Columbia Law School fall into **three broad buckets**:

- General/Systems Courses
- Experiential Learning
- Subject-Specific Courses

Students should consider taking courses from each bucket; choosing which courses to take and when is up to each student and should correspond with their interests and goals. Note that the buckets have some overlap and are intended as a conceptual guideline.



OPERATING PRINCIPLES FOR COURSE SELECTION

Goals

- ❖ What are your goals for law school? What knowledge and skills do you want to develop?
- ❖ What experiences and skills did you bring with you? What areas do you still need more exposure to?
- ❖ Do you want to learn substantive law in a particular area? Or would you prefer a skills-based focus or hands-on practice?
- ❖ *Students fare better after law school when they have a thoughtfully curated approach to their career.*

Context

- ❖ Which classes will touch on fundamental elements of public interest and public service: community, inequality, systemic issues, poverty, etc.?
- ❖ What theoretical underpinnings anchor the work you plan on doing? Which legal theories will provide a meaningful foundation to that work?
- ❖ *Consider whom you will serve, the issues they face, and the foundations of the work you plan to embark on.*

Interests

- ❖ What subjects are important to you and your career objectives?
- ❖ What related topics would broaden your knowledge to make you a well-rounded advocate?
- ❖ *You may also want to enroll in a few courses that seem unrelated to your career goals but that you still find interesting and intellectually engaging.*

Learning Environment

- ❖ Which learning settings appeal to you? Do you prefer large lectures or smaller seminars?
- ❖ What teaching methods will be used? Will the course focus largely on oral-based lecture methods?
- ❖ Which settings encourage you to be an active participant? Which ones enable you to learn from peers?
- ❖ *Make sure to select courses that offer learning environments where you can thrive.*

Professors

- ❖ Who do you want to study with and gain exposure to?
- ❖ Who could help you deepen your understanding of your area of interest?
- ❖ What have others said about the professor?
- ❖ Are they full-time faculty or an adjunct?
- ❖ *Consider whether the professor is someone you would like to work with as a research assistant or is a practicing adjunct professor and an expert in an area of interest to you.*

Writing Skills

- ❖ Do your courses require significant writing? Will you have opportunities to work on your writing if you don't plan to write a note or participate in another significant writing activity outside of the classroom?
- ❖ Can't provide you with a strong writing sample for employers?
- ❖ *The two Law School writing requirements should also be treated as opportunities to improve your skills, explore issues that interest you, and form a mentoring relationship with a faculty member.*

Relationships

- ❖ Is there a professor you want to advise you on career paths? Will the professor allow you to deeply delve into a particular substantive interest?
- ❖ Is there a professor you want to serve as a recommender, now or in the future?
- ❖ *Try to follow up on a class with visits to office hours, offers to do research or writing in a professor's area, and perhaps, taking multiple classes with a particular professor in a seminar or colloquia. Invest the time to get to know your professors as they will help you get the most out of your time at the Law School.*

Community

- ❖ Will the course connect you with peers who share your goals?
- ❖ Will the course expose you to peers with different views who will challenge your thinking?
- ❖ Are there any student groups you can join (or start) that connect you with students who will support you?
- ❖ *Also consider identifying centers in your interest area and attending events that bring in practitioners, including alumni, from the public interest/public service community.*

Workload

- ❖ Will your semester be too demanding?
- ❖ Will your workload be varied, with skills, hands-on learning, and substantive courses?
- ❖ Will your exams be tests or papers?
- ❖ *You may want to aim for a mix of exams and papers, rather than having exams in each of your courses, or committing to researching and writing multiple papers.*

Balance

- ❖ Do your courses balance breadth and depth? Or are they focused on one area of law?
- ❖ Are you sampling a number of areas while digging deeper in a few (e.g., following a large doctrinal course with a small seminar or experiential learning opportunity)?
- ❖ *You should also have a balance between experiential learning, substantive courses, and skills-based courses.*

Timing

- ❖ Are there certain foundational courses you'll need to take before advanced courses that interest you?
- ❖ Should you take your classes in a particular order?
- ❖ *Consider the sequencing and flow of your courses over the semester, and more broadly, throughout your time at Columbia Law School.*

Planning

- ❖ Do you have a backup plan in case you are not able to take a class?
- ❖ Have you created a four-semester plan with a list of all the courses you want to take, divided by semester? Take a look at [Appendix B](#) for sample student schedules.
- ❖ *Remember to keep in mind the Law School's semester credit minimum and graduation requirements.*

BUCKET 1: GENERAL/SYSTEMS COURSES

General/Systems courses are courses that are helpful to developing a strong legal foundation. They are not “public interest” courses per se, but will provide an important background in the legal system that is applicable to all careers.

Courses in this grouping will enable students to interpret laws and statutes, understand how our legal system works (including the structures, rules, and adjudicatory bodies), and gain basic legal knowledge. As a public interest or government attorney, this knowledge is crucial information for advocating for a client (individual, group of individuals, organization or government entity), for learning about a range of tools, different legal approaches and processes, and for understanding the different methods advocates can use to disrupt structural injustices in the legal system.

Here are some *examples* of courses that fall in this bucket. **This is not an exhaustive list.** Students should consult the [Curriculum Guide](#) and speak to PI/PS advisers for more information about what is right for them.

- **Administrative Law:** Administrative law courses provide the practical foundations needed to understand the administrative state, agency action, and regulation. Students should expect to encounter administrative agencies in every practice area, but these courses are especially helpful for students who intend to interact closely with state and federal administrative agencies, such as the Securities and Exchange Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, New York State Department of Labor, or many others, during their careers. Administrative law is also an important background for advocacy careers. Examples include:
 - Advanced Administrative Law
 - Legislation and Regulation
 - The Future of Administrative Law: Regulatory Innovation and Judicial Review
- **Black Letter Law:** Students may consider taking some black letter law courses, which will expose them to the fundamental principles of law. This is especially important for students who are considering judicial clerkships or careers in academia or other fields where doctrine is important. Speak to PI/PS advisers or a faculty member about whether it makes sense to take any of these courses – every student will be different, and for some students, these types of classes are not necessary. Do not blindly accept the advice of fellow students that you “must” take all these classes, including those who say you must take a certain class to prepare for the bar exam. Examples include:
 - Antitrust
 - Corporations
 - Corporate Taxation
 - Evidence (more below)
 - Federal Courts (more below)
 - Intellectual Property Law
- **Conflict Resolution:** Conflict Resolution courses delve into the dynamics and skills required for negotiations and dispute resolution. Negotiation will be a daily occurrence in any practice of law, but these courses are particularly helpful for students considering litigation work (as the majority of cases are settled outside of the courtroom) or contract negotiation work. Examples include:
 - American Civil Procedure
 - Conflict Resolution and Diplomacy
 - Negotiation Workshop
 - Thinking Like a Litigator
- **Ethics:** A Professional Responsibility course is a graduation requirement for all Columbia students. Columbia offers a choice among general and contextual courses that explore ethics and the regulation of

the legal profession. Some of the contextual offerings may be especially helpful to students in preparing for the particular world of practice they will enter as they discuss the substantive, theoretical, and procedural issues of ethical lawyering. Examples include:

- Professional Responsibility in Criminal Law
- Professional Responsibility Issues in Public Interest Practice
- **Evidence:** Evidence courses explore the fundamental rules for the trial process, appeals, testimony, privileges, admitting and excluding evidence, and more. These courses provide critical knowledge on the application of the rules of evidence, the boundaries attorneys and third parties must work within, and acquaint students with the language and procedure of the courtroom. Even if a student is not considering a career in litigation, it is strongly recommended that students take evidence to become a well-rounded social justice advocate.

Examples include:

- Electronic Evidence and Discovery Workshop
- **Constitutional Law:** Constitutional Law courses examine the scope of judicial powers, constitutional interpretation, the role of state and federal government, and the allocation of decision-making powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Taking constitutional law classes other than the required foundational course for all 1Ls can be particularly helpful for students interested in judicial clerkships or a career in impact litigation. Examples include:
 - Advanced Constitutional Law: Separation of Powers
 - Advanced Constitutional Law: First Amendment
 - Comparative Constitutional Law
- **Courts:** These courses consider the roles of the different courts of the United States, the relationships between state and federal law, and in-depth explorations of the opinions of the courts on the most pressing issues of our time. These courses are recommended for students planning to practice litigation or clerk in federal or state courts. Examples include:
 - Appellate Advocacy
 - Courts and the Legal Process
 - Federal Courts
 - Supreme Court
- **Legislation:** Legislation and regulation, which is a required course for all students, provides a fundamental understanding of the law-making bodies (federal, state, and local legislatures), the law-making process, and methods of reading and interpreting statutes and regulations. Students interested in engaging in administrative, political, or regulatory work should consider pursuing additional courses that offer a deeper dive into this subject area. Examples include:
 - State and Local Government Law
- **Procedure:** Procedural courses explore the process of adjudication, such as jurisdiction, standing, appellate review, rights of the parties, and more. Procedural courses help students understand how the larger legal system works and can help them start thinking critically as a lawyer. These courses are especially useful for students who will be doing direct civil representation, such as housing, employment, family law, or impact litigation. Examples include:
 - Advanced Civil Procedure: Scholarly and Lawyerly Perspectives
 - Criminal Adjudication
- **Research:** The practice of law, by its very nature, largely revolves around research. Research courses provide guidance and training on how to conduct thorough and efficient legal research. Excellent research skills are particularly useful for direct representation, litigation, legislation, and policy work. The following class is an example:
 - Advanced Legal Research Techniques

BUCKET 2: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Experiential learning is a “hands-on” learning approach in which students will develop key skills in addition to deeply engaging with the subject matter. Experiential learning is crucial for the development of the practical skills required to be a public interest or government advocate. These courses will help to create a well-rounded lawyer and can provide building blocks for short- and long-term career goals. Experiential learning classes provide opportunities to:

- develop lawyering skills in a hands-on way
- apply legal theories in practice
- develop a broad and deep knowledge base about a subject area
- get to know professors and practitioners well and gain mentorship opportunities
- build credentials for public interest or government work
- prepare for the many different stages and sectors of legal practice

All law students are required by the ABA and Columbia Law School to take at least 6 credits of experiential offerings. Students should consider taking additional credits, if possible, and/or engage in some form of experiential learning in both the 2L and 3L years. (However, because of the intensity and time commitment of these offerings, students should generally not try to do more than one in a given semester). **These opportunities are especially important for 3L students to prepare for the transition into the working world.**

There are several different types of experiential learning options at Columbia Law School (discussed in detail below):

- Clinics
- Externships
- Policy Labs
- Simulations
- Reflective Practice
- Supervised JD Experiential Study

As you think about these opportunities, please keep in mind the following:

- **Timing.** Not all experiential learning opportunities are available every semester. Additionally, some are for only one semester, whereas others are a two-semester commitment. Remember that if you do not get admitted into your first choice, you can try again later. There are limited spots, and sometimes 3Ls – especially those who have applied previously – get preference, but this should not discourage you from applying.
- **Skills and Knowledge.** You should think about the issues and skills that each opportunity focuses on. Try to choose ones that are the most interesting to you and are geared to the skills and knowledge you want to develop (both in the short and long term). Talk to students who have done them.
- **Commitment.** Clinics are more of a time commitment and provide more academic credits than externships. Skills-based simulation classes are often less of a time commitment than clinics and externships. Consider your course load and plan accordingly.

- **Balance.** There are many options to develop many different types of expertise. Be open-minded, thoughtful, and strategic in your selections.
- **Opportunities.** Summer internships will also provide experiential learning opportunities, so keep these in mind as you develop your individual approach.

Read all of the descriptions and links below carefully to understand the full range of these options at Columbia Law School.

A. CLINICS

Clinic students represent real clients or work with project partners and communities under the close supervision of full-time faculty, full-time staff attorneys, and fellows. An overall goal of clinics is to develop a sense of “real world” lawyering and advocacy. Students serve in a range of roles and learn to apply legal knowledge and skills to their clients’ or partners’ diverse concerns. Students learn the practical art of lawyering by assuming increasing levels of responsibility for cases and matters involving individuals, communities, and organizations that otherwise might be unable to secure assistance. Additionally, in seminars and simulations, faculty provide personalized feedback and reinforce skills, such as interviewing and counseling clients, mediating among parties with disparate interests, and drafting legal documents.

Columbia Law School’s clinics offer a range of options - the work includes impact litigation, direct services representation, transactional lawyering, collaborative investigations, policy initiatives, and grassroots advocacy. Clinics take place on campus, but may involve some off-campus components (e.g., visits to court). Clinics generally require 21 hours per week of client work.

Columbia Law School’s [clinic offerings](#) include:

- Community Advocacy Lab Clinic
- Criminal Defense Clinic
- Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic
- Family Defense Clinic
- Human Rights Clinic
- Immigrants’ Rights Clinic
- Environmental and Climate Justice Clinic
- Lawyering in the Digital Age Clinic
- Mediation Clinic
- Science, Health, and Information Clinic

Click on the above link to read descriptions of each clinic for more information. You can also learn more about clinical offerings, experiential learning opportunities, student groups, and journals in your substantive interest area by reading the [Substantive Area Guides](#) contained in the PI/PS Office’s [Your Public Interest Roadmap: Exploring Public Interest/Public Service at Columbia Law School](#).

B. EXTERNSHIPS

Columbia Law School offers innovative opportunities for experiential learning in which students tackle the legal problems of real clients while gaining theoretical knowledge of the underpinnings of their work. Externships offer a unique opportunity to observe and experience first-hand the “inside” of a legal organization. This includes gaining insights into day-to-day legal practice, ethical issues, work culture, and issues of work-life balance.

Like clinics, externships offer a chance to work with clients and organizations, in addition to having a classroom component. Unlike clinics, externships are off campus: students work on-site at a legal organization and are taught in a seminar by adjunct faculty who are experts in the particular field.

Each semester, there are 15-20 externship options at Columbia Law School (so there are usually more opportunities to do an externship than a clinic). Externships generally are less of a time commitment than clinics (around 15 hours/week for the field work) but offer fewer academic credits. Students in externships have the benefit of supervision both by the onsite supervisor as well as the adjunct faculty member teaching the externship.

Columbia Law School's [externship offerings](#) include:

- Arts and Entertainment Law
- Bronx Defenders on Holistic Defense
- N.Y. Attorney General's Office, Employment Law and Civil Litigation Skills *[full year]*
- Constitutional Rights in Life and Death Penalty Cases
- Criminal Appeals
- Criminal Prosecution - Manhattan/Brooklyn District Attorney's Office
- Domestic Violence Prosecution
- Economic Justice and Empowerment
- Environmental Practice
- Externship on the Federal Government: Semester in Washington, DC *[this requires relocation]*
- Federal Appellate Court
- Federal Court Clerk: Eastern District of New York (EDNY)
- Federal Court Clerk: Southern District of New York (SDNY)
- Harlem Economic Justice
- Housing Justice: The Right to Counsel in Housing Court
- Immigrant Youth Advocacy
- Immigration Defense
- Knight First Amendment Institute
- Law, Power, and Social Change
- NAACP Legal Defense Fund Racial Justice
- Neighborhood Defender Services of Harlem Community Defense *[full year]*
- N.Y. Attorney General's Office, Antitrust Enforcement
- N.Y. Attorney General's Office, Social and Environmental Justice
- Representing New York City: NYC Law Department
- United Nations
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York (EDNY)
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York (SDNY)

C. POLICY LABS AND PRACTICUMS

Increasingly, lawyers are called upon to solve exceptionally complex public problems and lead change through collaboration with professionals and stakeholders from many different disciplines and communities, and to link traditional lawyering skills with other forms of knowledge and expertise. Columbia Law School's innovative policy labs combine cutting-edge theory with hands-on learning, policy, and practice; litigation and transactional work; seminar-style, larger- class, and small-group settings; and live client as well as simulation experiences. They enable law students to work in teams with each other, professionals from other fields, and the communities they serve. Students work and learn together with faculty, advocates, government officials, and community leaders who have joined together to solve challenging problems that require ongoing learning and a wide range of expertise.

Columbia Law School's [Policy Labs and Practicums](#) include:

- Lawyer Leadership: Leading Self, Leading Others, Leading Change
- Empirical Legal Studies Lab
- Structural Change in Public Education
- Sexuality and Gender Law Practicum

Note: These are all tagged as "Practicums" in the Curriculum Guide.

D. SIMULATIONS

Columbia Law School offers more than a dozen [simulation courses](#) that give students the opportunity to tackle hypothetical, yet realistic, legal challenges in the classroom. Students can enroll in advanced simulation courses that expand on earlier lessons or delve deeper into a specific practice area.

- **Transactional Simulations:** Students learn to interview and counsel clients, negotiate between disputing parties, and draft contracts. Examples include:
 - Advanced Negotiation Workshop
 - Conflict Resolution and Diplomacy
 - Counseling the Digital Innovator
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Environmental Issues in Business Transactions
 - Law and Theatre
 - Negotiation Workshop
 - Practicing International Law
 - Representing Nonprofit Organizations: A Lawyering Skills Simulation Course

Note: There are clinics and externships that also develop transactional lawyering skills such as the Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic and Arts and Entertainment Law Externship.

- **Litigation-based Simulations:** Students learn to write briefs, examine witnesses, introduce evidence, and present oral arguments. Examples include:
 - Advanced Legal Research Techniques
 - Advanced Trial Practice
 - American Civil Procedure
 - Appellate Advocacy

- Constitutional Governance
- Electronic Evidence and Discovery Workshop
- Supreme Court
- Thinking Like a Litigator
- Trial Practice
- Trial Skills: Immigration
- Workshop in Brief Craft

Note: Many CLS clinics and externships (listed above) also develop litigation skills.

E. REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Columbia Law School offers other courses designed to encourage reflective practice or theoretical thinking about social justice. These classes may also include an experiential component. Examples of reflective practice courses:

- Law, Justice and Reflective Practice
- Lawyering for Change
- Pro Bono Scholars/Social Justice Externship
- Vision, Action and Social Change

F. EXTERNSHIP: LEGAL PRACTICE

The Legal Practice externship is a 3 credit experiential offering that builds on the “J.D. Supervised Experiential Study” explained below. The Legal Practice Externship involves 2 credits of placement in an outside externship placement that the student finds themselves and a 1 credit seminar that meets every other week. The seminar enables students to meet with and learn from other students in related placements, and earn more credits for the offering. It also means students do not have to find their own faculty supervisor to supervise the independent study project. Seminars will focus on the following areas: Advocacy and Litigation, Judicial Externships, and General Counsel and Organizational Placements. *This opportunity is best for a student that has already participated in a clinic, externship and/or policy lab.* For more information on term-time internships, please consult the PI/PS Office’s [Your Public Interest Roadmap: Exploring Public Interest/Public Service at Columbia Law School](#).

G. J.D. SUPERVISED EXPERIENTIAL STUDY

This is a “make your own” experiential learning project and is *best for a student that has already participated in a clinic, externship and/or policy lab*. This opportunity allows students to deepen their knowledge and experience and obtain academic credit for a substantial project that requires the exercise of professional skills. The project is comprised of: 1) direct supervision of the student’s performance by the supervising faculty member; 2) opportunities for performance, feedback from the instructor, and self-evaluation; and 3) a classroom instructional component, regularly scheduled tutorials, or other means of ongoing, contemporaneous, and faculty-guided reflection. The project may consist of fieldwork (e.g., an internship) and must be reasonably similar to the experience of advising or representing a client or engaging in other lawyering tasks. Please contact the [director of externships and field-based learning](#) for more details.

BUCKET 3: SUBJECT-SPECIFIC COURSES

Each area of public interest and public service work brings with it a body of knowledge, theories, and conceptual frameworks that are specific to that discipline. Subject-specific courses afford students the opportunity to develop substantive knowledge in an array of issue areas.

Please keep in mind the following:

- There are many subject-specific courses at Columbia Law School; these are generally offered either in a large classroom setting or smaller seminar setting. Seminars afford an opportunity to engage in discussions that a larger classroom setting does not. These types of discussions are crucial to your development as a public interest or government lawyer.
- In addition to developing skills and hands-on practice, experiential learning opportunities also develop subject-specific expertise – so they are included in these listings.
- Many issue areas are intersectional, so students can also build knowledge in one area by taking a course on another topic that has intersectional content or otherwise relates to or builds on that area.
- Students should seek a well-rounded approach with some variation in subject matter. Students will benefit from exposure to a wide range of subjects and issues within the field.
- It is helpful to talk to other students about classes or professors they enjoyed and/or read course evaluations.
- Class listings change each semester, so be sure to consult the [Curriculum Guide](#) for more information.

Below, please find many Columbia courses, organized by issue area. Keep in mind that a course may be listed in only one area even though it relates to *many* issue areas. Also keep in mind that the course may be taught by more than one professor. These are examples of what is, or has been, offered.

CHILDREN/YOUTH

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Adolescence • Community Advocacy Lab Clinic • Immigrant Youth Advocacy Externship • Representing New York City: NYC Law Dept. Externship (covers Juvenile Delinquency Matters) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Schools, Courts and Civic Participation • P. Structural Change in Public Education |
|--|--|

CIVIL RIGHTS AND RACIAL JUSTICE

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L. Abolition • Advanced Breakthrough in Abolition Through Transformative Learning Exchange • L. Antidiscrimination Law • L. Civil Rights • L. Civil Liberty and Segregation in Twentieth Century America • Community Advocacy Lab Clinic • S. Current Issues in Civil Liberties and Civil Rights • Criminal Defense Clinic • S. Critical Race Theory Workshop • Economic Justice and Empowerment Externship • L. Gender Justice • S. Latinos/as and Civil Rights Law | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L. Law of the Political Process • Law, Power, and Social Change Externship • L. Lawyering for Change • S. Mass Incarceration • NAACP Legal Defense Fund Racial Justice Externship • S. Native American Law • N.Y. Attorney General's Office, Social and Environmental Justice Externship • S. Schools, Courts and Civic Participation • S. September 11, the Trump Administration and the Rights of Non-Citizens |
|---|--|

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

- L. Advanced Constitutional Law: First Amendment
- L. Advanced Constitutional Law: Religious Liberty
- S. Advanced Constitutional Law: Separation of Powers
- S. Advanced Issues in the First Amendment
- S. American Jurisprudence: Judicial Interpretation and the Role of Courts
- L. Civil Liberties and Segregation in Twentieth Century America
- L. Civil Rights
- S. Church and State
- L. Comparative Constitutional Law
- L. Comparative Constitutional Studies
- S. Constitutional Ideas of the Founding Era
- L. Constitutional Interpretation
- L. Constitutional Law
- S. Constitutional War Powers
- L. Constitution and Foreign Affairs
- Criminal Defense Clinic
- L. Educational Equality: The Role of Law
- L. Federal Courts
- L. Ideas of the First Amendment
- S. Election Law
- L. Immigration Law
- L. Law of the Political Process
- S. Law and Regulation of Social Media
- S. Legal Interpretation
- S. Media Law
- L. Military Law and the Constitution
- L. Modern Constitutional Interpretation and Scholarship
- NAACP Legal Defense Fund Racial Justice Externship
- S. Native American Law
- S. Political Theory and the First Amendment
- S. Presidential Impeachment
- S. Public Integrity and Public Corruption
- S. September 11, The Trump Administration and the Rights of Non-Citizens
- L. State and Local Government Law
- S. Supreme Court
- S. The American Bail System
- S. The Crisis of Constitutional Democracy
- S. The Future of Administrative Law: Regulatory Innovation and Judicial Review
- L. Drugs and the Law

CRIMINAL

- L. Abolition
- L. Advanced Criminal Law: The Death Penalty
- S. Advanced Federal Prison Litigation
- S. Advanced Trial Practice
- S. Black Letter Law / White Collar Crime
- Bronx Defenders on Holistic Defense Externship
- S. Capital Case Litigation: Law and Lawyering
- Community Advocacy Lab Clinic
- L. Comparative Criminal Justice
- Constitutional Rights in Life and Death Penalty Cases Externship
- L. Criminal Adjudication
- Criminal Appeals Externship
- Criminal Defense Clinic
- L. Criminal Investigations
- Criminal Prosecution Externship (Manhattan/Brooklyn DA)
- U.S. Attorney's Office Externship (EDNY, SDNY)
- S. International Criminal Investigations
- C. International Criminal Law
- S. International Criminal Courts: Progress, Problems and Prospects
- S. Internet and Computer Crimes
- S. Interplay of Civil and Criminal Law
- L. Jurisprudence of War
- S. Landmark Criminal Trials
- S. Mass Incarceration
- S. National Security Investigations and Prosecutions
- Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem Community Defense Externship
- L. Professional Responsibility in Criminal Law
- S. Science and the Courts
- S. Sentencing
- S. Theater of Change: Artistry, Law and Activism

- S. Cybersecurity, Data Privacy and Surveillance Law
- S. Cybersecurity: Policy, Legal and Technical Aspects
- Domestic Violence Prosecution Externship
- L. Electronic Evidence and Discovery Workshop
- L. Evidence
- L. Federal Criminal Law
- U.S. Attorney's Office Externship (New Jersey)
- S. The American Bail System
- L. The Jurisprudence of Crime: Interdisciplinary Perspectives
- L. The Law of Genocide
- S. Trial Practice
- S. U.S. Civil and Criminal Enforcement of International Cartels
- S. Victims' Rights
- L. Drugs and the Law

EDUCATION

- L. Educational Equality: The Role of Law
- S. Schools, Courts and Civil Participation
- P. Structural Change in Public Education
- L. Topics in Education Law

EMPLOYMENT, LABOR and WORK WITH DIGNITY

- L. Antidiscrimination Law
- N.Y. Attorney General's Office, Employment Law and Civil Litigation Skills
- L. Disability Law and Culture
- Human Rights Clinic
- L. Labor Law
- S. Labor Rights in a Global Economy
- Mediation Clinic
- NAACP Legal Defense Fund Racial Justice Externship
- S. Vision, Action and Social Change

ENVIRONMENTAL

- S. Advanced Climate Change Law
- L. Climate Change Law and Policy
- Environmental Practice Externship
- L. Environmental Law
- L. Energy Regulation
- S. Environmental Issues in Business Transactions
- S. Extractive Industries and Sustainable Development
- S. Food Systems and U.S. Environmental Law
- L. International Environmental Law
- L. Land Use
- N.Y. Attorney General's Office, Social and Environmental Justice Externship
- S. Transactions in Emerging Energy Industries

FAMILY LAW

- S. Access to Justice: Current Issues and Challenges
- S. Adolescence
- L. Advanced Family Law: Pre-Nups, Property Distribution, and Alimony in Divorce
- Bronx Defenders on Holistic Defense Externship
- S. Domestic Violence and the Law
- Domestic Violence Prosecution Externship
- L. Family Law
- L. Gender Justice
- Immigrants' Rights Clinic
- Immigrant Youth Advocacy Externship
- L. Reproductive Rights and Practices
- S. Rethinking Globalization
- Advanced Family Defense Clinic

GOVERNMENT (FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL)

Note: In addition to the offerings listed below, many clinics also explore the role of government.

- L. Antitrust and Trade Regulation
- L. Conflict of Laws
- L. Constitution and Foreign Affairs
- Externships on the Federal Government: Semester in Washington DC
- S. Cybersecurity, Data Privacy and Surveillance Law
- S. Cybersecurity: Policy, Legal, and Technical Aspects
- U.S. Attorney's Office Externship (New Jersey)
- U.S. Attorney's Office Externships (EDNY, SDNY)
- L. Financial Crises, Regulatory Responses
- S. Food Law and Policy
- S. Governance of Financial Reporting
- S. International Humanitarian Law
- L. International Law
- L. International Securities Regulation
- L. Jurisprudence of War
- L. Law of the Political Process
- L. Law of the WTO
- L. Legislation and Regulation
- L. Military Law and the Constitution
- S. National Security Investigations and Prosecutions
- N.Y. Attorney General's Office, Antitrust Enforcement Externship
- N.Y. Attorney General's Office, Social and Environmental Justice Externship
- L. Rebuilding Government
- Representing New York City: NYC Law Department Externship
- S. Special Topics in Federal Courts
- P. Structural Change in Public Education
- L. Securities Regulation
- L. State and Local Government Law
- S. The Future of Administrative Law: Regulatory Innovation and Judicial Review
- S. U.S. Civil and Criminal Enforcement of International Cartels

HEALTH JUSTICE

- S. Bioethics Mediation
- L. Disability Law and Culture
- L. Drug Product Liability Litigation
- L. Health Law
- S. Mental Health Law
- L. Public Health Law and Social Justice
- L. Reproductive Rights and Practices
- Science, Health, and Information Clinic

HUMAN RIGHTS, IMMIGRATION, AND REFUGEE RIGHTS

- L. Abolition
- S. Adolescence
- Bronx Defenders on Holistic Defense Externship
- S. Extractive Industries and Sustainable Development
- L. Gender Justice
- L. Human Rights
- Human Rights Clinic
- S. Human Rights at Home: Advancing U.S. Social Justice
- S. Human Rights in the Americas and the Inter-American System
- Immigration Defense Externship
- L. Immigration Law
- S. Law and Policy of Homelessness
- Law, Power, and Social Change Externship
- S. Managing Human Rights
- S. Mental Health Law
- S. Native American Law
- L. Public Health Law and Social Justice
- L. Refugee Law and Policy
- L. Refugee, Migration and Citizenship Law: A Comparative Perspective
- S. Rethinking Globalization
- S. September 11, The Trump Administration, and the Rights of Non-Citizens
- S. Sovereignty, Constitutionalism, Judicial Review

- Immigrant's Rights Clinic
- Immigrant Youth Advocacy Externship
- S. International Criminal Courts: Progress, Problems and Prospects
- P. International Claims and Reparations
- S. International Human Rights Advocacy
- S. International Humanitarian Law
- S. Labor Rights in a Global Economy
- S. Latinos/as and Civil Rights Law
- S. The American Bail System
- United Nations Externship
- S. The Defense of Freedom of Expression Around the World: The Role of the Advocate
- L. The Law of Genocide
- S. The Legal History of American Slavery
- S. Transitional Justice

INTERNATIONAL and COMPARATIVE LAW

- S. Advanced International Commercial Arbitration
- L. African Legal Theory, Law, and Development
- S. Art, Cultural Heritage and the Law
- S. China in U.S. Litigation
- L. Comparative and International Antitrust
- S. Comparative and International Thought
- L. Comparative Constitutional Law
- L. Comparative Criminal Justice
- L. Conflict of Laws
- L. Constitution and Foreign Affairs
- S. Emerging Trends in International Justice
- S. Enforcing International Law
- L. European Union Law and Institutions
- S. Extractive Industries and Sustainable Development
- S. Fighting Corruption in Sports
- S. Foreign Direct Investment and Public Policy
- S. Geopolitics of Law and Conflict on the Korean Peninsula
- S. Global Challenges of Inside Counsel
- S. Global Political Thought
- L. Human Rights
- L. International Commercial Arbitration
- S. International Criminal Courts: Progress, Problems and Prospects
- S. International Criminal Investigations
- International Criminal Law
- S. International Economic Migration
- L. International Environmental Law
- S. International Human Rights Advocacy
- Reading Group of Modern History of Palestine
- S. International Humanitarian Law
- International Intellectual Property Law
- L. International Investment Law and Arbitration
- L. International Law
- S. International Trade Regulation Issues
- L. International Taxation
- S. Issues on Global Regulatory Reform
- L. Japanese Law, Society and Economy
- S. Jewish Law and Business Ethics
- L. Jurisprudence of War
- S. Labor Rights in a Global Economy
- L. Law and Legal Institutions in China
- L. Law of the W.T.O.
- S. Managing Human Rights
- S. Practicing International Law
- L. Refugee Law and Policy
- L. Refugee, Migration and Citizenship Law: A Comparative Perspective
- S. Rethinking Globalization
- S. Russia in the International Order
- S. The Crisis of Constitutional Democracy
- S. The Defense of Freedom of Expression Around the World: The Role of the Advocate
- L. The Law of Genocide
- S. The Law, Politics and History of U.S. Trade Policy
- L. The United States and the International Legal System
- L. Transnational Litigation
- S. Transitional Justice
- United Nations Externship
- S. U.S. Civil and Criminal Enforcement of International Cartels

LGBTQI and SEXUALITY/GENDER JUSTICE

- L. Antidiscrimination Law
- S. Access to Justice: Current Issues and Challenges
- L. Advanced Family Law: Pre-Nups, Property Distribution, and Alimony in Divorce
- L. Civil Rights
- Domestic Violence Prosecution Externship/Fieldwork
- S. Domestic Violence and the Law
- L. Family Law
- L. Gender Justice
- Immigrants' Rights Clinic
- L. Lawyering for Change
- L. Reproductive Rights and Practices
- S. Vision, Action and Social Change/Fieldwork

NATIONAL SECURITY/MILITARY/VETERANS

- S. Cybersecurity, Data Privacy and Surveillance Law
- S. Cybersecurity: Policy, Legal and Technical Aspects
- L. Constitution and Foreign Affairs
- S. Democracy's Future
- U.S. Attorney's Office Externship (New Jersey)
- U.S. Attorney's Office Externship (EDNY, SDNY)
- Human Rights Clinic
- S. International Humanitarian Law
- L. International Law
- L. Jurisprudence of War
- L. Military Law and the Constitution
- S. National Security Investigations and Prosecutions
- L. National Security Law
- S. Practicing International Law
- S. September 11, The Trump Administration and the Rights of Non-Citizens
- Veteran's Rights Externship

POVERTY LAW and ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Note: See also Civil Rights

- S. Poverty
- S. Access to Justice: Current Issues and Challenges
- N.Y. Attorney General's Office, Employment Law and Civil Litigation Skills Externship
- L. Civil Rights
- Community Advocacy Lab Clinic
- Criminal Defense Clinic
- S. Democracy's Future
- Economic Justice and Empowerment Externship
- Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic
- Human Rights Clinic
- S. Human Rights at Home: Advancing U.S. Social Justice
- Law, Power, and Social Change Externship
- Lawyering in the Digital Age Clinic
- NAACP Legal Defense Fund Racial Justice Externship
- L. Public Health Law and Social Justice
- Science, Health, and Information Clinic
- L. Law After Neoliberalism
- S. Consumer Bankruptcy Law and Public Interest Lawyering
- Ex. Housing Justice: The Right to Counsel in Housing Court

WOMEN

- L. Antidiscrimination Law
- L. Domestic Violence and the Law
- Domestic Violence Prosecution Externship
- L. Family Law
- L. Gender Justice
- Human Rights Clinic
- Lawyering in the Digital Age Clinic
- L. Reproductive Rights and Practices
- Economic Justice and Empowerment Externship

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE

In addition to academic coursework, there are other opportunities to develop knowledge and expertise in a particular issue area. These are discussed in greater detail in the [Substantive Area Guides](#) contained in the PI/PS Office's [Your Public Interest Roadmap: Exploring Public Interest/Public Service at Columbia Law School](#); students should consider the following:

STUDENT JOURNALS

Journals offer valuable experience in legal research, writing, and editing, and provide an opportunity for students to contribute to legal discourse in substantive areas of law. There are more than a dozen [student journals](#) at Columbia Law School, including several focused on public interest topics. Examples include:

- [Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems](#)
- [Columbia Journal of Race and Law](#)
- [Columbia Human Rights Law Review](#)
- [Columbia Journal of Environmental Law](#)
- [Columbia Journal of Gender and Law](#)

WRITING PROJECTS

Students should consider the following writing projects as opportunities to improve your writing skills and explore issue areas that interest you:

- Major and Minor Law School Writing Requirements
- Supervised Research Credit
- Research as Faculty Assistant

SPECIALIZED MOOT COURTS

Moot Court programs provide students with exciting opportunities to sharpen their legal skills. Columbia Law School has a broad range of upperclass moot court offerings, including several focused on public interest issues. Click [here](#) for more information.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Student organizations allow students to connect over shared interests and to learn about new issue areas. They also provide opportunities to develop practical experience, professional development, and mentorship outside the classroom. There are more than [85 student organizations](#) at Columbia Law School, including many focused on public interest. Examples include:

- Columbia Law Students Human Rights Association
- Criminal Justice Action Network
- National Lawyers Guild
- Parole Advocacy Project
- American Constitution Society

CONCLUSION

PI/PS advisers are here to guide you in thinking about how to plan your course of study and best prepare for a career in public interest or government advocacy. Please be sure to consult the Office of Student Services¹ and faculty members as appropriate as well.

Consult the Law School [Curriculum Guide](#) for the most up-to-date information and be familiar with Columbia Law School [graduation requirements](#).

As a reminder, this document is not intended as a roadmap or mandate – all students are on their own unique paths. Expose yourself to a wide variety of topics to better assess what you are most interested in, and push yourself outside of your comfort zone!

We hope you enjoy navigating the exciting opportunities that await you!

The Office of Public Interest/ Public Service Law and Careers is happy to assist you in learning more about your curricular options. For more information, please [contact](#) our office.

¹ The [Office of Student Services](#) also assists students through academic and other counseling, work with student organizations and journals, programming and events, and more. They can serve as a general sounding board for students as they navigate their way through the Law School. Read their thoughts on course selection and consider using their instructional videos featuring full-time and adjunct faculty sharing their suggestions for navigating the course selection process.

APPENDIX A: EXPLORING PUBLIC INTEREST/PUBLIC SERVICE CAREERS

Public interest and public service work can be deeply fulfilling on both a professional and personal level. Some lawyers feel passionate about the issues they work on or find a particular kind of work compelling; others enjoy using their talents to work for change in a world with much need. Here is a snapshot of what the work of a public interest or public service lawyer might entail.

Practice Settings. A small sample of places public interest and public service lawyers work includes:

- Academia
- Advocacy Organizations
- Courts
- Intergovernmental Agencies
- International Human Rights Organizations
- International Tribunals
- Labor Unions
- Law Enforcement Agencies
- Legal Service Providers
- The Military
- Nongovernmental Organizations
- Private Civil Rights Law Firms
- Prosecutorial Agencies
- Public Defenders
- Public Interest Law Firms
- Regulatory Agencies

Types of Work. The kinds of work you do, and approaches to change you might adopt, include:

- Coalition-Building
- Community Organizing
- Direct Legal Services
- Impact Litigation
- International Advocacy
- Media Advocacy
- Mediation
- Nonprofit Management
- Policy and Legislative Work
- Providing In-House Counsel
- Research and Analysis

Issue Areas. There is a vast array of legal topics and legal subject areas in public interest/public service work that you can pursue with your law degree. Below are some examples of these issues:

- AIDS/HIV
- Animal Rights
- Arts
- Bankruptcy
- Civil rights
- Children/Youth
- Community Development
- Consumer
- Criminal (Prosecution, Defense, Death Penalty, Prisoners' Rights)
- Disability
- Education
- Employment/Labor
- Environment/Energy/Environmental Justice
- Family Law
- Farmworker
- Financial Regulation
- First Amendment
- Gender Rights
- Government
- Health
- Housing/Foreclosure
- Human Rights
- Immigration/Refugee
- LGBTQI
- National Security
- Native American Rights
- Racial Justice
- Reproductive Rights
- Transitional Justice
- Transportation
- Voting/Campaign Finance
- Women's Rights

APPENDIX B : SAMPLE STUDENT SCHEDULES

Students often ask for a list of recommended courses and experiences to prepare them for their specific career paths. Recommendations vary greatly depending on whom you ask, and students are encouraged to consult with PI/PS advisers, faculty, alumni, and their peers to obtain several perspectives to inform their decision. Please consider the following schedules (for 2L/3L years) from actual students as a starting point for your research and/or as illustrative examples.

Please note that the lists of opportunities provided in this section are not exhaustive, **nor is there a guarantee each course, clinic or extracurricular activity will be offered every year**. The following merely provides a snapshot to help you get started. Seek advice from your PI/PS adviser, Student Services adviser, professors, fellow students, or mentors when choosing opportunities to pursue. We also suggest that you expose yourself to a variety of topics to better assess what interests you the most. Many areas are intersectional, so you will benefit from broader exposure.

Student A is interested in financial regulation and working in academia.

Courses Student A enrolled in:

- Bankruptcy law
- The Law of Monetary and Financial Institutions
- Appellate Advocacy
- Federal Courts
- Academic Scholars
- Teaching Fellows
- Supervised research paper
- Federal Courts
- Law of the W.T.O.
- Professional Responsibility
- Asian Americans and the Law
- Corporations
- Legislation and Regulation
- The Roberts Court
- Antitrust and Trade Regulation
- Cybersecurity, Data Privacy and Surveillance Law
- The United States and the International Legal System

Student A also participated in the Knight First Amendment Institute externship and the *Journal of Transnational Law*.

Student B is interested in reproductive rights, with a focus on gender-based violence

Courses Student B enrolled in:

- Evidence
- Family Law
- Meanings of Motherhood - Legal and Historical Perspectives
- Supervised JD experiential study
- Climate Change Law and Policy
- Employment Law
- Professional Responsibility
- Domestic Violence and the Law
- Security and Gender Law Practicum
- Religious Freedom & Reproductive Rights
- Advanced Family Law: Pre-Nups, Property Distribution, and Alimony in Divorce
- Human Rights
- Immigration Law
- Legislation and Regulation
- Federal Income Taxation

Student B also participated in a supervised JD experiential study serving as an extern at a domestic violence nonprofit and served on the *Columbia Journal of Gender and the Law*

Student C is interested in civil rights impact litigation.

Courses Student A enrolled in:

- Administrative Law
- Civil Rights Litigation
- Current Issues in Civil Liberties
- Evidence
- Faculty Research Assistant
- Federal Courts
- Federal Criminal Law
- Law of the Political Process
- Professional Responsibility
- Religious Minorities in Supreme Court Litigation
- Teaching Fellows
- Vision, Action and Social Change

Student A also participated in the U.S. Attorney's Office EDNY Externship and the *Human Rights Law Review*.

Student D is interested in environmental law, litigation, and policy work.

Courses Student B enrolled in:

- Administrative Law
- Climate Change Law and Policy
- Comparative Constitutional Law
- Environmental Law
- Evidence
- Federal Courts
- Food Law and Policy
- Gender Justice
- Health Law
- Land Use
- Professional Responsibility in Criminal Law
- Reproductive Rights and Practices
- Supreme Court

Student B also participated in the Advanced Environmental Law Clinic and the *Human Rights Law Review*.

Student E is interested in pursuing a career in criminal prosecution.

Courses Student C enrolled in:

- Black Letter Law/White Collar Crime
- Corporations
- Criminal Investigations
- Criminal Adjudication
- Domestic Violence and the Law
- Evidence
- Family Law
- Federal Criminal Law
- Law and Neoliberalism
- Law and Contemporary Society
- Mental Illness and Criminal Defense
- Mental Health Law
- Professional Responsibility
- Sentencing
- Supervised JD Experiential Study

Student C also participated in the Adolescent Representation Clinic and Domestic Violence Prosecution Clinic.

Student F is interested in human rights, foreign policy, and national security.

Courses Student D enrolled in:

- Faculty Research Assistant
- Global Constitutionalism
- Human Rights at Home: Advancing U.S Social Justice
- International Law
- International Human Rights Advocacy
- Jurisprudence of War
- Law of the Political Process
- Law, Culture, and Notions of Justice
- Military Law and the Constitution
- National Security Investigations and Prosecutions
- Nuremberg Trials and War Crimes Law
- Professional Responsibility: Issues in Public Interest Practice
- Rebuilding Government
- The Law of Genocide

Student D also participated in the Human Rights Clinic and the *Journal of Law and Social Problems*.

<p>Student G is pursuing a career in criminal defense, with a focus in immigration reform.</p> <p>Courses Student E enrolled in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Law • Advanced Federal Prison Litigation • Criminal Adjudication • Criminal Investigations • Current issues in Civil Liberties and Civil Rights • Evidence • Federal Courts • Federal Criminal Law • Immigration Law • Legislation and Regulation • Professional Responsibility in Criminal Law • Supervised Research Paper • Trial Practice <p>Student E also participated in the Mass Incarceration Clinic, Immigration Law Externship, and the <i>Journal of Race and Law</i>.</p>	<p>Student H is interested in racial justice issues, and pursuing a career in housing and economic development law.</p> <p>Courses Student F enrolled in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Law • Advanced Federal Prison Litigation • Civil Rights • Courts and the Legal Process • Evidence • Federal Courts • Law and Policy of Homelessness • Lawyer Leadership: Leading Self, Leading Others, Leading Change • Professional Responsibility: Becoming a Lawyer • Schools, Courts and Civic Participation • Supervised Research Paper • The Constitution <p>Student F also participated in the Mass Incarceration Clinic, Advancing Social and Environmental Justice in the New York Attorney General's Office Externship, and the <i>Human Rights Law Review</i>.</p>
<p>Student G is interested in free speech and digital privacy rights.</p> <p>Courses Student G enrolled in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Law • Advanced Constitutional Law: First Amendment 	<p>Student H is interested in immigrants' rights as they relate to antidiscrimination, labor, and employment law.</p> <p>Courses Student H enrolled in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Law

- Antitrust and Trade Regulation
- Computers, Privacy and the Law
- Conflict of Laws
- Criminal Adjudication
- Criminal Investigations
- Current Issues in Civil Liberties
- Cybersecurity, Data Privacy, and Surveillance Law
- Evidence
- Faculty Research Assistant
- Federal Courts
- Labor Rights in a Global Economy
- Mass Torts
- Professional Responsibility
- Regulation of Financial Institutions
- Supervised Research Paper
- Trial Practice

Student G also participated in the Knight First Amendment Institute Externship, Low Wage Worker Externship, and the *Human Rights Law Review*.

- Citizenship, Religion, and Identity
- Civil Rights Litigation
- Corporations
- Courts and the Legal Process
- Criminal Adjudication
- Criminal Investigations
- Employment Discrimination Litigation
- Evidence
- Faculty Research Assistant
- Federal Courts
- Labor Rights in a Global Economy
- Professional Responsibility
- September 11 and the Rights of Non-Citizens
- Teaching Fellows
- Trial Practice

Student H also participated in the Immigrants' Rights Clinic, Advanced Immigrants' Rights Clinic, and the *Journal of Race and Law*.