

CRIMINAL DEFENSE CLINIC

Spring Semester 2027
Professors Amanda Savage & Kelly Caldwell

Students enrolled in the semester-long Criminal Defense Clinic represent low-income people charged with a variety of municipal ordinance violations and misdemeanor crimes including assault, resisting arrest, disorderly conduct, theft, and others, in Denver and surrounding cities. Students learn and apply lawyering skills such as interviewing, building client relationships, client counseling, investigation, legal research and writing, oral advocacy, negotiation, and trial skills and preparation. Students appear regularly in court for hearings such as arraignments, pretrial conferences, motions hearings, and trials. Through classes and representation of clients, students will learn about systemic injustice in the criminal legal system and about the connections between the criminal legal system and trauma, mental health, and a variety of governmental systems and societal factors. Students will also explore issues of forensic science and learn to incorporate them into their work defending clients.

Prerequisites

Although not required, it is highly recommended that students take Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, Evidence, and Trial Practice before or concurrently with the clinic. A demonstrated commitment to public interest law is preferred. To participate in a Student Law Office Clinic, students must have completed 30 credit hours by the start of the clinic and have a GPA of 2.3 or higher.

Class Requirements

Class attendance is mandatory. Classes are expected to meet **twice per week**, day and time TBD. Students must also attend a **mandatory** orientation starting the first week of January. Orientation includes classes, simulations, and significant out-of-class work. Orientation covers the substantive, procedural, and ethical aspects of criminal defense and familiarizes students with the Student Law Office and Criminal Defense Clinic procedures.

Credits

Students enroll for the full semester, earning **9 credits in total**. Four credits are earned through in-class activities, and the remaining five credits come from client-related work outside of class. Participation in both classroom instruction and client work is required throughout the semester.

Time Commitment

The Criminal Defense Clinic requires a substantial time commitment. Students should expect

to spend significant time on client matters each week, with ebbs and flows expected depending on the status of their cases. In addition, students spend four hours each week in class and significant time out of class completing supervision meetings and seminar assignments. To avoid conflicts of interest, students may not take on internships, externships, other experiential courses, or outside work while enrolled in the Criminal Defense Clinic unless given explicit advance authorization.

Benefits of the Clinic

The Criminal Defense Clinic provides an opportunity for students to integrate professional ethics and values, legal theory, and practical skills by representing low-income clients charged with crimes. Students develop lawyering skills including client relationship building, investigation, discovery review, case theme and theory development, motion drafting, litigation, and trial practice. Learning takes place in the classroom, in supervision sessions with faculty, and in Colorado's courtrooms and jails. Students gain experience working with clients facing a range of legal, social, and economic challenges and learn about the resources available to them. Depending on the case, students may also litigate constitutional and forensic science issues.

Learn More

- On our Clinical Programs website at law.du.edu/student-law-office
- On our social media:
 - Follow us on **Instagram** at [@denver_law_clinical_programs](https://www.instagram.com/denver_law_clinical_programs)
 - Follow us on **LinkedIn** at [student-law-office-at-du](https://www.linkedin.com/company/student-law-office-at-du)

Apply

Applications open on **Monday, October 26, at 9:00 a.m. and close on Sunday, November 1st at 11:59 p.m.** on our [Clinical Programs website](http://law.du.edu/clinical-programs). Application submissions must include:

- Updated Law School Resume (attached as a PDF)
- Legal Writing Sample of 5 to 10 pages (attached as a PDF)
- Conflict of Interest Form detailing your current and past work or volunteer experience (to be completed alongside your application)

Late applications will not be accepted.

