

Judicial Externship Course (Law 751) Overview

The course is described in detail in its syllabus. This information is intended only to give you a broad overview of the program. Please feel free to contact Prof. Geer or students who have been involved in the program.

The Judicial Externship course may be taken for 1-7 credits in a semester. Field placement requirements include at least 46 hours at your placement for each credit, e.g. 6 credits = 276 hours of field work. Please note that it is often more difficult to place students for less than 4 credits. Judges generally prefer students who can spend full days and a range of 15-20 hours a week during the fall and spring semesters 30 + hours a week in the summer. We have placed students for fewer hours, but it is the exception.

Classroom component. During the fall and spring semesters, there is a mandatory Orientation and class meeting (60-90 minutes) about six times during the semester covering a variety of topics including: research; judicial and attorney ethics; opinion writing; journal writing; court systems; and overview of the immigration and bankruptcy courts. The course attempts to draw on the resources of the local legal community in the class offerings. Readings are assigned. Due to the diverse placements in the summer, the class and orientation sessions are scheduled during the first week of classes. Summer session Orientation dates will differ. Check with Prof. Geer. Students are responsible for the timely submission of weekly timesheets and a weekly journal. The writings have a primary focus upon reflective lawyering and professional ethics. Students are eligible to apply to the program after completing all first-year courses. Currently, the course is graded on a P/F basis for field work and P/F/C- for one credit for the course work. The Immigration Court placement has a pre- or co-requisite: Immigration Law.

The application period is announced prior to registration and requires the timely submission of an application and resume to the Externship Director. **Students may not solicit placements on their own.** Placement priorities are detailed elsewhere on the law school website. After the application deadline, resumes are submitted to judges who will schedule students for interviews. The program cannot guarantee you a placement or an interview. Ultimately, these are the judge's decisions. You may apply up to 12 credits in externship courses toward your graduation requirements. You may only enroll in the judicial externship once.

JUDICIAL EXTERNSHIP DESCRIPTIONS

Every judicial externship placement is unique; no two placements are alike – even within the same court system. The following general descriptions, written with the help of past externs, are designed in part to provide a very brief synopsis of what an extern might encounter in various court systems from family court, state district court (either all civil or a split docket with ½ civil and ½ criminal department), probate court, state supreme court, federal district court, to bankruptcy court. This summary is not intended as a substitute for a follow-up discussion with Professor Geer and student externship alum.

Most local judicial chambers or departments consist of a judge, law clerk(s), judicial executive assistant (JEA), court clerk, bailiff, etc. For externship purposes, both the judge and the law clerk(s) are considered field supervisors. In most placements, students work closely with the law clerk(s) and JEA; some judges will also make time to discuss questions with externs and help them understand procedure and protocol. Again, every placement is unique. Regardless of where an extern is placed, a positive, professional attitude is an essential component of experiencing a successful externship.

FAMILY COURT

A family court extern will brief a high volume of cases, by stating the relevant facts, summarizing the party's arguments, and sometimes making a recommendation, for the judge and helping prepare the judge's calendar. A family court extern will also review joint petition and summary disposition checklists, looking to see if the filed paperwork has all of the required documents and/or necessary language. A family court extern may assist *pro per* individuals and attorneys via telephone. Because exposure to attorneys and the public is higher in this court system, more networking opportunities usually exist. Unless assigned a special project, a family court extern will not spend much time, if any, conducting legal research due to the court system's heavy caseload and the judge's familiarity with family law. Depending on the placement, a family court extern will usually have an opportunity to observe a multitude of proceedings related to custody, divorce, TPO's, domestic violence, adoption, guardianship, drug rehabilitation, and much more.

NEVADA STATE DISTRICT COURT

A state district court extern will brief a high volume of cases for the judge by stating the relevant facts, summarizing the party's arguments, and sometimes making a recommendation. On rare occasions, an extern may draft or edit a judicial opinion. In preparation for criminal calendars, a state district court extern may review and summarize probation violation reports, pre-sentence investigation reports, prior court minutes, and/or inmate letters. In most placements, a state district court extern will have some opportunities to network and interact with attorneys. Unless given a special project, a state district court extern will not spend much time researching. Depending on the placement, a state district court extern will usually have an opportunity to observe a great variety of court proceedings, including motions to dismiss, motions for summary judgment, evidentiary hearings, jury trials, bench trials, settlement conferences, criminal sentencings, criminal inquest proceedings, probation revocations, appeals from justice court, and much more.

PROBATE COURT-NEVADA 8TH DISTRICT (CLARK COUNTY)

A probate court extern will research a variety of issues, write memoranda to the Probate Commissioner, and on occasion, present research and recommendations orally to the Probate Commissioner. A probate court extern will have many opportunities to network and interact with attorneys and occasionally assist

individuals with pro per matters. A probate court extern will have an opportunity to observe probate court proceedings. Although Wills & Trusts and Community Property are not a prerequisite, these courses are recommended as helpful background knowledge.

NEVADA SUPREME COURT

A Nevada Supreme Court extern will research and write extensively on a variety of issues. Depending on the particular placement, an extern will often start with fundamentals, such as cite checking and researching special projects, and gradually increase his/her responsibilities to possibly drafting a bench memorandum for the justices and reviewing a soon-to-be published judicial opinion. An extern will spend a significant amount of time on most projects as the pace is slow but thorough, and the law clerk(s) will often review and comment on an extern's work product during this process. Because a Nevada Supreme Court extern does not interact with any attorneys or public, applicants should be aware that they will not have an opportunity to network in this somewhat isolated placement. A Nevada Supreme Court extern will have limited opportunity to observe oral argument due to scheduling constraints.

FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT

A federal district court extern will research and write extensively on a variety of issues and motions. Depending on the particular department, a federal district court extern will either prepare bench memoranda for the judge or draft orders for the judge's signature. A basic bench memorandum might consist of a statement of facts, summaries of the documents filed in the case, and a recommendation. After writing the bench memoranda, an extern may have an opportunity to discuss and review his/her work product with a law clerk(s) before explaining his/her findings and recommendations to the judge. Additionally, a federal district court extern will likely write a variety of other documents including criminal sentencing memoranda and scripts. In most placements, a federal district court extern will have very limited, if any, interaction with attorneys and opportunities to network. Depending on the particular judge's calendar, judicial externs will have some opportunity to observe civil and criminal proceedings, although not as much as in state court due to the less heavy caseload.

U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT

A bankruptcy extern will research, draft memoranda and, on rare occasions, a judicial opinion. A bankruptcy extern may counsel with the Judge, law clerk, and members of staff on legal matters affecting the administration of bankruptcy laws and perform other duties as prescribed. A bankruptcy extern will have many opportunities to observe courtroom proceedings. Prior knowledge of bankruptcy is helpful, but not required, as those with no bankruptcy background will be quickly brought up to speed in this particular field of study and much of the substantive law are in areas you cover in your first year of law school. The majority of students who participate as externs in this court have not had a class on bankruptcy law but take it later or concurrently.

JUSTICE COURT OPPORTUNITY

While the program does not typically place students with the state's Municipal or Justice Courts because law clerks are not usually these judges and they often do not provide sufficient writing and research opportunities, the following program is an exception.

The Las Vegas Justice Court civil division is comprised of 2 civil departments. Each department has an

assigned law clerk. The court's jurisdiction consists of civil litigation with the amount in controversy is less than \$10,000, unlawful detainer actions, and summary eviction actions. An externship with this division would give the student extensive research and writing opportunities by assisting the judge in reviewing files in preparation for a motion calendar, drafting findings of fact and conclusions of law, and drafting court opinion for judicial review. In addition, an externship would give the student experience in reviewing documentation to you by plaintiff's in support of her request for a default judgment and making recommendations to the judge as to whether or not the documentation legally sufficient. Students working for the Las Vegas Justice Court as externs would report directly to the judge presiding over the department to which they are assigned. Opportunities will also exist for courtroom observation of motion calendars as well as jury and bench trials. Any questions regarding the externship can be addressed to by Chief Judge Melissa Saragosa at 671-3367.