



Description

The Northern California Innocence Project clinical program provides a unique educational opportunity for SCU law students to investigate and litigate possible wrongful convictions while learning and practicing legal skills. Students also learn about systemic issues that lead to wrongful convictions and their disproportionate impacts, and have the opportunity work on policy ideas and legal reforms aimed at addressing these issues.

Credit

The Northern California Innocence Project is a year-long, two semester program (Fall and Spring semesters), available to 2L and 3L students. Students enroll for three units of academic credit per semester. For each unit of credit, a student is responsible for 50 hours of participation, including case work and class attendance. In order to be eligible to enroll in the Northern California Innocence Project clinic, students must submit an application by 5pm, Friday, April 12, 2024 and be accepted into the program. Applications are available on the Northern California Innocence Project website (www.ncip.org/educate) beginning March 11, 2024. Applicants may be interviewed and/or asked to complete a short writing exercise. Once you are accepted into the Clinic you will be given instructions as to how to enroll.

Because the Clinic is a yearlong course, no grade will be awarded until the end of the second semester. The Northern California Innocence Project clinic meets the Professional Skills Requirement and is a Public Interest and Social Justice Law Certificate course. Students can take a maximum of 6 units of graded credit from any combination of course participation.

Training and Education

Class time will focus on teaching the skills necessary to litigate cases, including drafting legal briefs, creating arguments and policies to get courts or legislatures to recognize rights they have not yet recognized, conducting oral arguments, and conducting evidentiary hearings. Class time also includes some lecture and discussion the systemic issues that lead to wrongful convictions, the legal work and advocacy that has been done to protect people from wrongful convictions, and current policy ideas and efforts to continue to improve our system. Each semester will center at least one active case in which students will work on the case and practice the skills needed to accomplish whatever that case requires to advance. Students will also be assigned to work closely with one or more lead attorneys who will advise them, supervise their work, and meet with them on a weekly basis both individually and in groups.

Advanced Practice Clinic

Students who have completed the one-year Northern California Innocence Project course are encouraged to enroll in the Advanced Practice Clinic which provides the opportunity for them to continue to advance their individual cases and to research and discuss in-depth the specific issues relevant to promising cases. The Advanced Practice Clinic is available every semester, including summer. Participation requires faculty approval.



Four Reasons to take the Northern California Innocence Project Clinic

1. Get to know and do work on behalf of our incredible clients

At the Northern California Innocence Project, you will have the opportunity to meet with and learn from our clients, who are in or have been through some of the worst situations imaginable and yet they remain the most incredible people. You will hear from and get to know our clients who are examples of resilience, strength, and grace. Working with them is a true privilege.

2. Learn from our Innocence Attorneys

Work closely with passionate and dedicated supervising attorneys who will meet with you weekly, provide you with opportunities to work on active cases and practice your skills in a safe and supportive environment.

3. Do Real Legal Work

At the Northern California Innocence Project, you are considered part of the legal team. Our students work on current, active cases. They dive right into the records to assist with the investigation and litigation of our cases. They are expected to conduct factual and legal research, as well as legal drafting, that will be put to use in our cases.

4. Confront the System

Through your interactions with our clients, experts, defense attorneys, prosecutors, and witnesses, you will learn about the causes of wrongful convictions, and the criminal legal system's failings more generally, including its perpetuation of systemic racism. You will be empowered to confront the system and think about the ways you can work to remedy its inequities and injustices.