



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 11, 2025 and be accepted into the program. Applications are available on the Northern California Innocence Project website (www.ncip.org/educate) beginning March 10, 2025. 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.

While Evidence is not formally required to take NCIP, please note that there will be evidentiary components of our class and casework that will require those who have not previously taken evidence and/or are not taking it concurrently with NCIP to become familiar with the California Evidence Code.

Because the Clinic is a year-long course, no grade will be awarded until the end of the second semester. The Northern California Innocence Project clinic meets the experiential 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 and is graded Credit/No Credit.