

Innocence Project of Texas Externship

Fall 2014

1:30- 2:30 Wednesdays

Instructor:

Jennifer Mirll, JD

Case Director

Innocence Project of Texas

Email: jen@ipoftexas.org

Office phone number: 806-744-6525

Course Description:

This program combines real-world experience with academic study by including a classroom component in which faculty members guide and encourage discussion on how the experiences relate to other aspects of a student's legal education.

The Innocence Project of Texas is a nonprofit organization dedicated to investigating and litigating claims of innocence made by those convicted of serious crimes in Texas. Each student is in charge of multiple investigations to help determine if an inmate is innocent, how the project can prove the inmate's innocence, and how to obtain the prisoner's release.

Students earn 2 hours of credit for the course, which includes a two-hour classroom component taught by School of Law faculty and completion of 130 hours of casework.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of the course, the student should have:

1. General knowledge of the Texas criminal justice system, with a focus on post-conviction remedies for wrongfully convicted individuals.
2. General understanding of the causes of wrongful convictions.
3. General understanding of various bases of post conviction relief such as junk science, DNA, recantations, etc.

Methods for Assessing Expected Learning Outcomes:

The expected learning outcomes for the course will be determined by the students' performance in topics relevant to the course by the following: (1) Assigned Readings, (2) Class Participation and Completion of required Hours, and (3) Completion of one or more Case Memo and Trial Transcript Summary.

Course Requirements:

Assigned Readings: Reading assignments will be designated for each class meeting. Students will be expected to complete these assignments and engage in class discussion on relevant topics.

Case Memo and Trial Transcript Summary: Each student or group will be expected to complete a case memo and trial transcript summary for their assigned case or cases. Templates for these are provided on the Case Materials disc.

Class Participation: All students are expected to actively participate in class discussion.

Class Attendance: Class attendance is expected. One (1) unexcused absence will be allowed. If a student is unable to be present for class, they should notify Professor Mirll in advance.

Hours Requirement: Each student is required to complete 130 hours of casework. Many hours can be completed in the students' own time. All students must get at least 5 hours/week of their work in the IPTX office.

***Fulfillment of all Work Assigned by Professor Myhra:** Professor Myhra will assign weekly journals and a final reflection paper that must be completed to receive credit in this course.

Student Responsibility /Likelihood of Success: If a student needs clarification on any course assignment, then it is his/her responsibility to request clarification from the instructor. To increase the likelihood of successful performance on any course assignment, the student is required to attend class, take notes, and read assigned material.

Academic Dishonesty Policy: Academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating on in-class activities or exams) will not be tolerated. The first occurrence of academic dishonesty will result in a 0 for the activity or exam and a report will be filed with Student Judicial Programs and the Law School. A second occurrence of academic dishonesty will result in failing the course and filing an additional report. Guidelines for academic dishonesty and integrity are available at <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/studentjudicialprograms/academicinteg.php>

ADA Policy: Any student who requires special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact the instructor to make necessary arrangements for accommodations. A student should present appropriate verification from the Office of Student Disability Services, the disability support program at Texas Tech University.

Observation of a Religious Holy Day: Texas House Bill 256 requires institutions of higher education to excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day. The student shall also be excused for necessary time to travel. An institution may not penalize the student for the absence and must allow for the student to take an exam or complete an assignment from which the student is excused. No prior notification of the instructor is required.

Assignments and Readings: (Assignments subject to change)

Class 1: August 27

Case Review Procedures
Case Flow Chart
Sample memo and Transcript Summary

Class 2: September 3

Tim Cole Opinion Order
Post Conviction DNA and Actual Innocence

Class 3: September 10

Progress in Fire Investigations
False confessions class discussion and video

September 17: No class

Class 4: September 24

The Texas Criminal Justice Process
In-class demonstration: Procedural History Searches

Class 5: October 1

Applications for Writ of Habeas Corpus
Innocence Writs
DUE: First drafts of all case documents completed (Procedural History, Memo, Transcript Summary)

Class 6: October 8

Suppression of Exculpatory Evidence
Michael Morton Act

Class 7: October 15

Ex Parte Robbins
SB Bill 344

Class 8: October 22

Shaken Baby Syndrome (pg. 1- 56)
DUE: Second drafts of all case documents completed (Procedural History, Memo, Transcript Summary)

Class 9: October 29

Shaken Baby Syndrome (pg. 57-106)

Class 10: November 5

Update on Legal Standards

Class 11: November 12

Dog Scent Lineups

Class 12: November 19

No readings
DUE: FINAL drafts of all case review documents.