Global Gender Justice Clinic

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What makes this an internationalized curriculum? Please describe the experience abroad and how you internationalized the curriculum at home. How has the international experience been integrated into the curriculum?

Cornell Law School’s Global Gender Justice Clinic, launched in fall 2014, works with organizations and individuals on projects that use international human rights law, language, and methodologies to advance gender justice. Its curriculum is internationalized in its substantive focus on international law and legal tools, its international and comparative approach to seminar classes, and its engagement in projects that address gender justice issues around the world, some of which include international travel.

Through a critical seminar and practical project work, Clinic students examine and engage in local, global, and transnational efforts to combat gender-based violence and discrimination. Working under faculty supervision, students undertake cases and projects that focus on issues relating to global gender justice by pursuing a variety of methodologies. Students may participate in domestic, regional, or international litigation; engage with human rights bodies; draft or analyze proposed legislation; conduct fact-finding and reporting; contribute to community-based public education campaigns; or pursue other human rights strategies. Some projects give students the opportunity to travel abroad, while others use human rights tools to address gender-based violence or discrimination in the United States.

For example, in the past year, the Clinic has worked on projects in which students:

- Filed a petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on behalf of survivors of sexual assault in the U.S. military;
- Submitted shadow reports to the UN Human Rights Council and UN Committee Against Torture on sexual violence in the U.S. military and engaged in related advocacy at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland;
- Conducted desk research and developed a field research protocol for a human rights documentation and training project that addresses the causes and consequences of women’s imprisonment in Jamaica;
- Drafted a resolution recognizing freedom from domestic violence as a fundamental human right; successfully advocated for its passage by six local governments in Tompkins County, New York; and developed a plan for implementing the resolution’s principles;
- Collaborated with a new human rights clinic at the University of Nairobi School of Law to convene a stakeholders’ workshop in Kisumu, Kenya, that addressed the problem of sexual violence in schools;
• Launched a study of the relationship between women’s economic empowerment and domestic violence globally, which seeks to determine how economic empowerment initiatives can be designed to empower women against domestic violence; and
• Conducted research in preparation for potential international advocacy relating to discrimination against lesbian and bisexual women.

These international experiences are continually integrated into the students’ supervised team meetings and seminar classes. Class sessions address substantive themes relating to gender justice and human rights; provide training in relevant research, writing, and advocacy skills; and offer students an opportunity to reflect critically on the difficult questions that affect the practice of human rights and promotion of global gender justice. The Clinic’s instructors frequently refer to students’ international experiences in class and encourage students to draw upon these experiences in class discussions. Students also submit a monthly journal entry, in which they are further invited to integrate theory and practice in reflecting upon their clinical experience.

What are the intended student learning outcomes of the internationalized curriculum related to knowledge generation, changed attitudes, and developed skills, and how do you assess them?

The Clinic’s curriculum is designed to give students experience in the diverse activities in which human rights and gender justice advocates engage. It aims to provide them with knowledge of international human rights and related areas of the law and to help them develop critical lawyering skills, including, among others, skills in international and comparative legal research, written and oral advocacy, interviewing, counseling, fact development, ethics, professionalism, and teamwork. The curriculum also seeks to encourage students to be reflective, thoughtful and culturally sensitive advocates and to foster a shared commitment to advancing justice and equality. These outcomes are assessed through students work products; their improved competence in conducting interviews, engaging in oral advocacy, and carrying out their other project-related responsibilities; and the quality of their participation and interactions in class, team meetings, and other collaborative settings. Students’ reflections during project rounds classes, in one-on-one meetings with their instructors, and in their journal entries also provide valuable insight into the course’s success in achieving its intended pedagogical outcomes.