

The Pennsylvania Innocence Project

Duquesne University School of Law

This clinical program offers students the unique opportunity to exercise their lawyering skills by reviewing and investigating actual claims of innocence on behalf of Pennsylvania inmates and, where appropriate, pursuing legal avenues for exoneration and release from prison. Each student will be assigned cases under the supervision of the director and managing attorney of the Project. In the course of investigating factual claims and researching legal issues, students will review criminal files, interact with investigators, contact other attorneys, interview the client and witnesses, gather documentation and prepare legal documents and memoranda. Although most claims will be resolved by written pleadings and briefs, any court appearances will also involve students. Each student will also review new applications of a valid and viable claim. As a consequence of this work, students will have many opportunities to develop and hone their lawyering skills in interviewing, fact investigation, factual and legal analysis, legal writing and problem-solving. The classroom component will cover topics including the definition of a claim of innocence, investigating and raising claims of innocence under Pennsylvania law, preservation of innocence claims for federal review, post-conviction discovery rules, state and federal post-conviction procedures and problems, investigative techniques and skills, the nature and uses of DNA and other scientific evidence and the state and federal rules governing admissibility of such evidence. As the semester progresses, students will explore the substantive and procedural issues in the context of the actual cases on which they are working as well as discuss the ethical issues common to this areas of practice.

[Learn More About the PA Innocence Project »](#)

Time Requirements

Students meet at the Pennsylvania Innocence Project office on Thursday evenings from 6:00-7:40 p.m. each week. In addition to the two-hour weekly seminar, students are required to perform at least 10 hours per week at the Project office. Each Friday, students will submit weekly timesheets to the managing attorney documenting their hours. Over the course of the semester, this means that each student should log a total of 140 hours of practice or work time, not including the two-hour classroom presentations.