

LEGAL CLINICS REGISTRATION FALL 2026

ELIGIBILITY

- **Completion of all first-year courses** required for graduation by the end of the SPRING 2026 semester.
- Students who entered law school in **2025 must have a GPA of 2.3** or above; students who entered prior to **2025 must have GPA of 2.0** or above.
- If you are on academic probation, you **may not pre-register** for any of the clinics.

DRAWING & WAIT LIST

If your name is drawn for a Clinic slot, you will be entered on an approved list for that Clinic and your name will not be placed on any waiting list. After all Clinics slots have been filled, we will continue drawing names for the waiting lists and names will be placed on the waiting list of all clinics ranked on the application. Students who have previously enrolled in a clinic will be put on a waiting list for open spots after all eligible first-time clinic students have been approved to enroll. **Students will be notified of the clinic selections on Thursday, April 2, 2026.**

REGISTRATION

When you are approved to register, you must register yourself for the appropriate clinic during your assigned registration time. If you choose not to enroll, please notify the appropriate clinic director immediately so empty slots can be filled.

**SEE INSIDE FOR
INFORMATION ABOUT
EACH CLINIC**

- **CIVIL & CONSUMER**
- **CRIMINAL DEFENSE**
- **FEDERAL TAXPAYER**
- **FIRST AMENDMENT**
- **HUNTER GENDER
VIOLENCE**
- **PATENT LAW**
- **SMALL BUSINESS &
TRADEMARK**
- **VANSICKLE FAMILY**

**APPLICATION
DEADLINE**

**Monday, March 30,
2026**

by 8am

CIVIL/CONSUMER CLINIC

5 credits
Fall 2026

Representing clients in civil matters including disputes involving deceptive trade practices, real estate, housing, credit and debt and engaging in advocacy and outreach to increase access to justice for underserved communities.

DIRECT REPRESENTATION

Clinic students interview clients, identify the legal and factual issues and engage in counseling to assist in resolving clients' problems through negotiation. When litigation is involved, students draft pleadings and discovery, conduct negotiations and mediations, take and defend depositions, and serve as lead counsel in motions and hearings, trials and appeals. Faculty try to keep caseloads small to allow students to fully explore the facts and legal issues of each case and to ensure that students provide excellent legal representation to their clients.

ADVOCACY AND OUTREACH

Students also engage in advocacy and outreach to enhance access to justice. In past semesters, students submitted written comments to federal and state agencies and to the Texas Supreme Court on proposed changes to court rules. In Fall 2026, the Clinic will be expanding its work with the Homestead Preservation Center in a collaborative project to educate families about their rights regarding inherited property and to assist them in securing legal title to their homes. All students should expect to attend at least 2 evening workshops for the Homestead Preservation project during the semester.

CLINIC CLASS

The class is an integral part of the clinic experience. We use a variety of teaching and learning methods to assist students with the legal and ethical issues that arise in the cases as they develop the lawyering and professional skills they will use to represent their clients. Topics include interviewing and counseling, fact investigation, problem-solving, legal research, as well as negotiation and collaboration.

FACULTY SUPERVISION

In addition to class, students engage with faculty in weekly supervision meetings to develop their lawyering and professional skills and review other dimensions of client representation.

TIME COMMITMENT

Students should expect to spend a minimum of 15 hours per week on clinic-related work. Time includes preparing for and attending class, as well as working with clients and other clinic-related matters.

CO-REQUISITE

Professional Responsibility. Students must take it before or during the semester in which they are enrolled.

MANDATORY ORIENTATION
Thursday and Friday, August 20-21, 2026.
No waiver, no exceptions.

Director: Prof. Mary Spector
mspector@smu.edu
214-768-2578

Assistant Director Eliot Shavin
eshavin@smu.edu, 214-768-2025

SMU DEDMAN School of Law
Fall 2026

Criminal Clinic (6 Credits)

The Criminal Clinic provides law students with a combination of academic and experiential learning through the practice of criminal defense law in the Dallas County Criminal Courts. Criminal Clinic students act as trial counsel- arguing everything from a motion to suppress evidence with live police witnesses to a jury trial!

Clinic students primarily represent low-income clients charged with misdemeanor offenses in the Dallas County Criminal Courts. Some of the most common charges include: Assault, Criminal Mischief, Criminal Trespass, DWI, Possession of Marijuana, Prostitution, Theft, and Unlawfully Carrying a Weapon. Clinic students may also represent individuals convicted of a felony who violate probation orders.

YOU will be the attorney and engage in investigation, interviews, discovery, plea negotiations, case planning, motion practices, and trial. With the assistance of the supervising attorneys, you will be handling real cases and representing real clients. To learn about the kind of work Criminal Clinic students engage in, please refer to the Criminal Clinic [webpage](#) and click on the section on the right side of the page.

SMU's Criminal Clinic is in its 47th year. The supervising attorneys have been practicing criminal defense law for over a combined 90 years. Criminal Clinic Associate Director Mike McCollum has been with the Clinic since 1977, and Adjunct Clinical Professor Debbie Sanchez is a former prosecutor with the Dallas District Attorney's Office and has been in private practice for over 31 years. The bulk of her practice involves representing individuals charged with a felony offense.

Your responsibility to the Clinic and your clients requires a substantial commitment on your part. Your time commitment to the Clinic is a minimum of 20 hours per week (total of at least 255 hours for the semester). This includes time spent at the courthouse, office hours (you must log 3 hours per week during business hours in the criminal clinic library) and class time. Mandatory classes are on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 3:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. In scheduling your other courses, you should take into account the flexibility you need to represent clients. It is highly recommended that you do not register for morning classes because you will be at the courthouse almost every day and court takes up most of the morning – do not schedule morning classes to avoid conflicts. While the time commitment seems heavy, the completion of tasks on cases will easily help you hit the hours requirement for the Clinic.

The clinic is a one-semester, graded course. We will enroll up to 12 students for the fall semester for 6 credits. Due to the nature of trial preparation, the time commitment to the Criminal Clinic may exceed the minimum 20-hour per week requirement. Additionally, clinic assignments will include two short observation papers, a trial notebook based on a case you worked on, and a meeting with a clinic professor to review case file management.

To be eligible for the Criminal Clinic, you must be a student in good academic standing and you must have all required 1st year courses completed by the end of the spring semester 2026. Recommended, but not required, classes are Professional Responsibility and Texas Criminal Procedure.

Student selection for the Criminal Clinic is part of the general clinic pre-registration process.

MANDATORY TWO-DAY ORIENTATION: August 20 & 21, 2026 all day.
Swearing in: Friday, August 21st, 12:00-2:00

If you MUST DROP Criminal Clinic, you MUST RECEIVE PERMISSION by notifying Legal Assistant Gloria Carranza at carranzag@smu.edu, by 5 p.m. on August 10, 2026, who will then contact Associate Director Debbie Sanchez and Associate Director Mike McCollum.

SMU DEDMAN SCHOOL OF LAW
TAX CLINIC
Fall 2026

TAX CLINIC - The Tax Clinic is a combination of academic and practical experience. Students represent low-income clients who have tax problems before the Internal Revenue Service. The scope of representation ranges from negotiating settlements and collection plans with the IRS to taking a client's case to Tax Court. Participation in the Tax Clinic will be a unique educational experience in which you will be participating in the representation of actual clients before the IRS and in certain instances in the Tax Court.

Co-requisite	Federal Income Taxation and a student in good standing.
Time Commitment	Minimum of 12 hours per week. You need to be available during the day.
Class	Monday 1:00-2:15
Credit	4 hours for the fall semester

DO NOT PRE-REGISTER FOR ANY CLINIC UNLESS YOU INTEND TO ENROLL AND ATTEND ORIENTATION. Tremendous time and effort goes into preparing for the Clinics. Please do not sign up if you do not intend to follow through on your registration. Students who drop within 10 days of school starting may result in a Clinic slot going unfilled. **If you must drop the Tax Clinic, you must notify Gloria Carranza, Legal Assistant, at gcarranza@smu.edu by 5:00 on Monday, August 10th so students on the waiting lists can enroll.**

In scheduling your other courses, you should take into account the flexibility of time you will need to represent clients. **YOU MUST HAVE ALL REQUIRED 1ST YEAR COURSES COMPLETED BY THE END OF THE FALL SEMESTER 2025.**

Orientation – Friday, August 21st, 9:00-2:00

ORIENTATION IS MANDATORY NO EXCUSED ABSENCES

First Amendment Clinic
(6 credits)
FALL 2026

The First Amendment Clinic, funded by the Stanton Foundation and other generous donors, focuses on First Amendment issues including free speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly and petition.

Director, **Tom Leatherbury**, who retired from Vinson & Elkins' Appellate Practice in 2022, regularly represents traditional and digital publishers, as well as broadcasters, in all aspects of media litigation, including libel, privacy and other torts, reporter's privilege, newsgathering and access, misappropriation, and breach of contract actions. Prior to joining SMU, he worked on cases with First Amendment clinics at Yale Law School and at Cornell Law School. He received his B.A. from Yale College and his J.D. from Yale Law School.

Assistant Director **Peter Steffensen**. Before coming to SMU, Peter was a Staff Attorney in the Criminal Injustice Program at the Texas Civil Rights Project, where he litigated and advocated for systemic policy change in the areas of pretrial detention, conditions of confinement, and police abuse & misconduct, among others. Peter received his B.A. from Rice University in 2010, and his J.D. from NYU School of Law in 2017.

The Clinic represents individuals and media organizations, both non-profit and for-profit, in a range of litigation and counseling matters that could include:

- Plaintiffs' federal civil rights claims involving the First Amendment
- Defamation defense
- Texas Citizens Participation Act motions and appeals (anti-SLAPP)
- Claims defending/advancing the rights of petition or assembly, including use of social media
- Motions to obtain access to court records and courtroom proceedings
- Challenges to gag orders in criminal and civil cases
- Motions to quash subpoenas to journalists
- Pre-publication review of news articles
- Amicus briefs
- Legislative issues
- Requests for government records under state and federal records laws

MANDATORY ORIENTATION: Friday, August 21, 2026

1. **ALL Clinic Students Required Session: Lunch provided, 12:00 noon. Session starts 12:30-1:30 p.m. Location: TBD**
2. **1st Amendment Clinic Orientation, 2:00-5:00 p.m. – Location TBD**

Class: Tuesdays, 3:15-5:35 p.m., 101 Carr Collins, 6 credit hours. Students should expect to spend approximately 18 hours per week on clinic-related work.

Director and Clinical Professor:
Tom Leatherbury
thomasl@smu.edu
Ph. 214.213.5004

Assistant Director & Adjunct Clinical Professor:
Peter Steffensen
psteffensen@smu.edu
Ph. 214.768.4077

Recommended Courses:

Evidence, Constitutional Law II, First Amendment

Drop Date:

To drop clinic you must notify Director Tom Leatherbury, via email thomasl@smu.edu by 12 noon, Monday, August 10, 2026

HUNTER LEGAL CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

Representing survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking and engaging in advocacy to prevent and seek solutions to gender-based violence



FIELDWORK

Client representation: students provide legal aid in a range of civil and criminal matters, including securing post-conviction relief, family law claims, defense of criminalized survivors, and humanitarian immigration petitions.

Advocacy: students work on projects such as creating educational or *pro se* materials, drafting policy papers and reports, or conducting legislative advocacy.

CLINIC SEMINAR

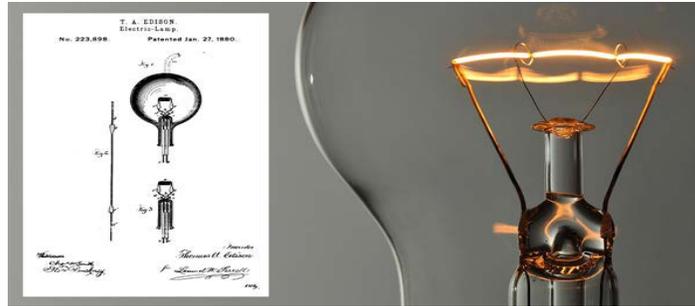
The clinic seminar provides the foundation for students' lawyering experiences. The interactive course includes small group work, role-plays, and other experiential activities to help gain understanding of and perspective on issues experienced in casework.

ELIGIBILITY

Professional Responsibility is a required co-requisite. A mandatory orientation will be held on August 20-21, 2026.

TIME COMMITMENT

Approximately 20 hours per week.



PATENT CLINIC Fall 2026

The Patent Clinic provides students with the opportunity to gain experience advising clients on patent-related matters, with the potential to represent these clients in front of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO).

Students, under the supervision of an adjunct clinical professor who is a practicing patent attorney, will provide pro bono legal services to individual and small business clients seeking to protect their inventions using the patent system. The work will typically involve counseling clients regarding patent-related matters, conducting inventor interviews, conducting patentability searches, preparing patentability opinions, drafting and filing patent applications, and drafting and filing responses to communications received from the USPTO.

Class Time and Credit Hours: All students will meet with the clinic director on Mondays from 3:15 to 4:15 pm for advanced instruction on selected patent prosecution topics. Students successfully completing the Patent Clinic will earn 3 credit hours.

Eligibility: To participate in the Patent Clinic: (1) you cannot be a USPTO employee, (2) must have completed all first-year courses required for graduation, (3) you must not be on academic probation, and (4) you must meet one or more following qualifications: (a) Successful completion of Patent Law; (b) Significant patent-related experience; and/or (c) Registered to practice before the USPTO. Preference will be given to those who have completed or are concurrently enrolled in Patent Prosecution.

Though you need not already be registered to practice before the USPTO, you must have the necessary technical background to qualify to take the Patent Bar examination for registration to practice before the USPTO. The necessary technical qualifications are explained in the USPTO's General Requirements Bulletin. (See http://www.uspto.gov/ip/boards/oed/exam/OED_GRB.pdf, pages 4-8.)

Important dates:

Important dates:

- Deadline to drop by Monday, August 10th at 12:00 p.m. You must contact Gloria Carranza at carranzag@smu.edu who will then contact the Director.
- Orientation and swearing in: Friday, August 21, 9:00-12:00.
- Class: Mondays 3:15-4:15

**SMU DEDMAN SCHOOL OF LAW
SMALL BUSINESS AND TRADEMARK CLINIC**

SMALL BUSINESS AND TRADEMARK CLINIC. The Small Business and Trademark Clinic provides free legal services to new and existing small businesses and non-profit organizations that cannot afford to pay legal fees. In addition, this Clinic is a member of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's prestigious Law School Clinic program. Law students will act as Associate Members of the State Bar of Texas. Clinic students will learn how to advise clients about the start-up of their businesses and non-profit corporations, prepare necessary formation documents, counsel clients regarding various legal issues, and draft contracts, licenses and assignments. Students will also advise clients about basic trademark matters, research availability of trademarks as well as draft and file federal trademark applications and responses to office actions with the USPTO

If you are accepted for the Small Business and Trademark Clinic, you will work directly with clients in the transactional practice of law and represent clients with entity formation, contracts, trademark and/or copyright matters.

Number of Students	6 students for spring
Prerequisites	Business Enterprises and a student in good standing.
Recommended course	Counseling the Small Business Owner (not required).
Time Commitment	Minimum 255 working hours during the semester. You must be available during the day for clinic hours.
Class	Tuesday & Thursday 9:30-10:50 am
Credit	6 credits, no exam.
Mandatory Orientation	Friday, August 21, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Student case assignments are based on client needs. The Clinic always has many requests for trademark work. All students will likely have trademark work and entity formation. Availability of contract drafting work depends on client needs. Further, this Clinic includes a community engagement and bar activity component, which may require attendance and participation at off-campus events, some of which may be scheduled during the evening or on the weekend. Students will also be required to apply for the Impact Lab: Due Diligence team and work on collaborative projects/clients from Cox Business and/or Lyle Engineering. Students should also plan to work at least 18-20 hours per week and to spend at least 10 hours/week on campus, working inside the Clinic.

ORIENTATION IS MANDATORY. NO EXCUSED ABSENCES PERMITTED.

DO NOT PRE-REGISTER FOR ANY CLINIC UNLESS YOU INTEND TO ENROLL AND ATTEND ORIENTATION.

Tremendous time and effort go into preparing for the Clinics. Please do not sign up if you do not intend to follow through on your registration. Students who drop within 10 days of school starting may result in a Clinic slot going unfilled.

If you must drop the Small Business and Trademark Clinic, you must notify Gloria Carranza, Legal Assistant, at carranzag@smu.edu, Monday, August 10, by 12 noon, so other students on the wait lists can enroll. In scheduling your other courses, you should consider the flexibility of time you will need to represent clients. **YOU MUST HAVE ALL REQUIRED 1ST YEAR COURSES COMPLETED BY THE END OF THE SPRING SEMESTER 2026.**



LAUNCHED
SPRING
2016 WITH 6
LAW
STUDENTS

VanSickle Family Law Clinic

Mission

We exist to increase access to justice and mentor student associates to think and act like competent ethical lawyers.

Skills

Student associates develop fundamental lawyering skills - that can be transferred to any practice area - such as interviewing and counseling clients, negotiating, fact development and analysis, strategic case planning, problem-solving, drafting documents, time management, tracking "billable" hours, litigation and basic trial skills.

Meets on Wednesdays
9-11:20 am*

ARE YOU READY FOR A COACHING EXPERIENCE?

The VanSickle Family Law clinic provides legal services to low-income clients in all matters of family law such as divorce, child custody, protective orders, modifications, child support & parentage. We also collaborate with Judges, DVAP, and community and pro bono organizations to increase access to justice. Through our popular "self-help desk" at the courthouse, we have provided brief services to over 1800 self-represented litigants.

Casework & Supervision

Students will be the primary practitioners on cases (as lead counsel or member of a team) & meet weekly with supervising attorney for guidance, tutorials, & case planning.

Real Clients

Student associates will have an opportunity to use the law learned, such as civil procedure & evidence, while representing real clients.

Class & Time Commitment

It's not like a traditional podium course. No casebook is required!

The student's learning experience will be beyond the classroom, working on client matters and community pro bono projects.

The "Clinical Teaching Pedagogy" includes case rounds (where students facilitate "talks" about their cases with fellow clinic students to brainstorm ideas and solutions), role plays, exercises, simulations, docket calls, guest speakers, field trips, courthouse project & "pop-up" clinics.

Time Commitment: Students will spend approximately 20 hours a week on the Clinic coursework (including class time & preparation, etc.) and receive six credits for the course. Note - 6 weeks of class time will be spent at the courthouse providing on the spot legal services to those representing themselves.

*NOTE: Pro Se Clinic @ courthouse meets for 6 weeks from 9-noon

Mandatory Orientation
Thur | Aug 20 2026
Fri | Aug 21 2026

Recommended courses
Family Law
Professional Responsibility
Professional Identity and Development