



Public Interest Law

Lewis & Clark
Law School

Portland, Oregon



What Is Public Interest Law?

Public interest law is the practice of law on behalf of individuals or causes that are not typically served by for-profit entities such as a private law firm or business. Public interest lawyers serve the public by working for civil legal services organizations, nonprofit organizations, public defense organizations, prosecutors' offices, government agencies, lobbying for the advancement of rights, and more. Public interest work is not confined to any one political ideology; it is work undertaken to advance concepts of justice, fairness, and protection of the public, rather than for purposes of commercial or personal gain. Public interest lawyers fight so everyone has access to justice regardless of their background or income.

Lewis & Clark Law School has a long and rich history of supporting students and alumni interested in public interest work. The school has one of the highest percentages of graduates entering public interest careers in the country and is highly ranked among the nation's leading public interest law programs by the *National Jurist* magazine.

Lewis & Clark students are offered a wide array of classes and resources directed at preparing them for public interest careers. Clinics provide students with opportunities for hands-on experience while working with experienced law school professors in areas like low-income tax relief, small business transactions, and international environmental law. Classes cover diverse public interest topics like environmental justice, humanitarian law and the war on terror, and sexual orientation and gender identity. Volunteer work opportunities in the community are available from the first day of law school onward through the Pro Bono and Community Service Program, student group projects, and a robust internship

and externship program, allowing students to connect with those in need and the organizations that serve them. After graduation, Lewis & Clark's network of graduates and its Loan Repayment Assistance Program provide alumni with the tools to start a professional career working for the public interest.

Some people dream about making a difference, our graduates change the world.

The Certificate

Lewis & Clark students may choose to earn a specialty certificate in public interest law. The certificate shows future employers that students have focused their training on classes and skills relevant to a public interest career, and it demonstrates that students have a commitment to the community and the causes public interest lawyers fight for. To receive the certificate, students must complete three core classes (Evidence, Administrative Law, and Constitutional Law II), at least three black letter and advanced seminar courses dealing with public interest areas of practice, and five credit hours of practical skills classes including clinics, moot courts, and field placements. Some of the courses are listed later in this brochure. Additionally, certificate recipients must complete at least 50 hours of pro bono work while enrolled at Lewis & Clark and must write a paper on a public interest law topic.

Possible focus areas within the public interest certificate are health, disability, and aging; labor and employment; consumer law; international law and immigration; family and juvenile law; civil rights; and Indian law. In addition to the Public Interest Law Certificate, Lewis & Clark offers subject-specific certificates in animal law, business and commercial law, criminal law, environmental and natural resources law, global law, intellectual property law, and tax law.

Curriculum

With a wide array of courses focused on public interest law and areas of practice, students may have a law school experience that connects directly with their interest in justice and passion for public interest law. Courses are balanced between black letter classes that teach the framework of the law and small group seminars where students and professors discuss the law, policy, and how they affect the public.

Courses listed below are typical of the public interest courses offered during a student’s enrollment at Lewis & Clark.

Advanced Legal Research
Animal Law
Animal Law Seminar
Appellate Advocacy
Bankruptcy and Debtor/Creditor
Capital Punishment Seminar
Children in the Law Seminar
Civil Rights Litigation
Clean Air Act Seminar
Clean Water Act
Climate Change
Comparative Constitutional Law
Complex Litigation Seminar
Constitutional Theory Seminar
Consumer Law
Contemporary Issues in Family Law
Contemporary Issues in Indian Law Seminar
Criminal Justice: Comparative Criminal Procedure Seminar
Criminal Justice: Criminal Law
Criminal Justice: Criminal Practice Seminar
Criminal Justice: Litigating Federal Habeas Corpus Cases Seminar
Criminal Justice: National Security Law
Criminal Justice: Terrorism and National Security Seminar
Criminal Justice: Victims in Criminal Procedure
Cultural Resources Protection Seminar
Disability Law
Elder Law

Employment Discrimination
Employment Law
Environmental/Animal Law Advocacy
Environmental Dispute Resolution Seminar
Environmental Enforcement
Environmental Justice
Environmental Law
Environmental Law Advanced Topics Seminar
Environmental Litigation
Family Law
Farmed Animals: Law and Policy Seminar
Federal Courts
Federal Indian Law
Federal Indian Law Seminar
First Amendment Seminar
Forest Law and Policy
Hazardous Waste Law
Health Law and Policy Seminar
Immigration Law
International Criminal Law Seminar
International Environmental Law
International Human Rights Seminar
International Humanitarian Law: Global War and Terror
Juvenile Justice Seminar
Labor Law
Land Use Planning Seminar
Law and Education Seminar
Law of Global Labor Markets Seminar
Law, Science, and Environment Seminar
Local Government Law
Moot Court: Appellate Advocacy
Moot Court: Client Counseling
Moot Court: Jessup International Law Competition
Moot Court: Mock Trial
Moot Court: Native American Law Students Association
Moot Court: Negotiation
Mediation and Negotiation Skills Seminar
Native American Natural Resources Law
Natural Resource Law and Policy Seminar
Nonprofit Law Seminar
Northwest Energy Law
Oil and Gas Law

Public Interest Lawyering: Theory and Practice Seminar
Public International Law
Public Lands and Resources Law
Race and the Law Seminar
Reproduction and the Law Seminar
Sexual Assault Seminar: Victims’ Rights, Remedies, and Realities
Sexual Orientation and Gender in the Law Seminar
Street Law Seminar
Trade and Environment
Trial Advocacy
Underrepresented Nations and Peoples
Water Law
Wetlands Law
Wildlife Law
Workers’ Compensation

Executive Director of Public Interest Law

Lewis & Clark has a full-time director of public interest law. The executive director advises students and alumni on public service careers and funding options, advises students on pro bono opportunities, arranges programming and informational activities on topics related to public interest careers, and coordinates public interest career fairs. The executive director also administers the school’s pro bono program, provides oversight to the loan repayment assistance program, oversees the public interest certificate program, and acts as the staff advisor to the student Public Interest Law Project. The director of public interest law tracks federal loan repayment changes and helps students and graduates find out how they can take advantage of government programs designed to reduce or forgive annual loan repayment costs.

Hands-On Experience

Students at Lewis & Clark get the foundation for their public interest careers in the classroom and build on that foundation with

hands-on experiences and practical training in programs that both foster learning and help clients. Students have a wide range of practical skills opportunities to choose from in which they can gain credit toward their degree. These include on- and off-campus clinics and internships and externships. Pro bono work also allows students to obtain practical skills in the legal field on a voluntary, noncredit basis.

Clinics

In the clinics, students work for public interest clients under the supervision of Lewis & Clark’s clinical faculty. At Lewis & Clark, we have several clinics and a practicum available, each of which can offer a public interest-minded student valuable practical experiences. The clinics are briefly described below and covered in more depth in our “Practical Skills and Professional Development” brochure, in other program-specific materials, and at law.lclark.edu.

Animal Law Clinic

The Animal Law Clinic specializes in animal protection issues, including cases against those who have harmed or injured animals, custody disputes, activist defense, “dangerous” dog hearings, pet trusts, and assistance for non-profit organizations.

Criminal Justice Reform Clinic

The Criminal Justice Reform Clinic collaborates with the Oregon Justice Resource Center to provide students the opportunity to work on criminal law issues such as innocence and wrongful convictions, criminal justice reform, and post-conviction reentry.

Earthrise Law Center

Environmental advocacy is the central mission of Earthrise. Clients are both local and national and include conservation groups, tribes, business coalitions, and others who recognize the interdependence between humans and the natural world.

International Environmental Law Project

The International Environmental Law Project (IELP) focuses on international environmental issues. IELP students have worked on trade and environmental issues, as well as protection of threatened and endangered species. Students also help public interest environmental lawyers in developing countries create new laws or strengthen existing laws by providing legal memoranda on international and domestic legal issues.

Low Income Tax Clinic

The Low Income Tax Clinic represents individuals experiencing a variety of tax controversies with the Internal Revenue Service including offers in compromise and innocent spouse defenses.

National Crime Victim Law Institute Clinic

Lewis & Clark's Crime Victim Litigation Clinic operates in conjunction with the National Crime Victim Law Institute (NCVLI). Clinic students support lawyers nationwide who are directly representing crime victims in criminal cases. They also help write amicus curiae briefs that are filed in trial and appellate courts, assist in preparing for litigation, and contribute to NCVLI's library and brief bank on victims' rights issues.

Small Business Legal Clinic

The Small Business Legal Clinic (SBLC) provides business transactional legal advice to new and emerging businesses, primarily those owned by women, minorities, and recent immigrants. Students help with a wide array of business transactions, including business formation, contract drafting and negotiation, regulatory matters, employment law, franchise agreements and leases, and more.

Legal Practica

Through legal practica, students receive course credit for part-time work under the supervision of a local attorney while still attending class on campus. While we offer several practicum placements, those that cover criminal law, disability law, and environmental law may be of most interest to our public interest students.

Externships

Through the externship program, students have the chance to work full-time in a public interest law office over the summer or an entire semester while receiving full academic credit for their work. Public interest externships occur across the country and around the world in nonprofits, government offices, and NGOs. Externships are an excellent way to build skills and connections to employers for jobs after law school.

Recent externship hosts have included the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Oregon Public Broadcasting, St. Andrew Legal Clinic, the Northwest Center for Constitutional Rights, and the Center for International Environmental Law both in Washington, D.C., and Switzerland.

Pro Bono and Community Service

Pro bono is legal volunteer work done for low-income individuals, nonprofits, the courts, or the government. Community service is nonlegal volunteer work. Lewis & Clark's Pro Bono Program is designed to encourage and foster community-based volunteer legal service projects. Through pro bono experiences, all interested students have an opportunity to act as volunteer legal interns with public service



Without **Antonio Gonzalez '06**, most of his clients would not have anyone else to turn to. Just after graduating and taking the bar, Antonio went to New Orleans and volunteered to help Hurricane Katrina victims with issues ranging from F.E.M.A. appeals to insurance claims. Antonio returned to Portland later that year to join St. Andrew Legal Clinic working on family law issues, "helping clients protect their children, separate themselves from destructive situations, and work toward improving their lives," he says. "My education at Lewis & Clark, and the mentorship of my professors, impressed upon me the special responsibilities to community that accompany the privileges extended to attorneys in our society."

The financial realities of public interest careers mean that it can be challenging to cover student loan costs. Since graduating, Antonio has received assistance from Lewis & Clark's Loan Repayment Assistance Program, freeing him to do the work he wants to do. He says, "The assistance LRAP provides allows me to keep working at St. Andrew and to concentrate on my clients' problems instead of my own financial situation."

organizations. There are pro bono opportunities in many different substantive areas for those with a range of experience levels. Pro Bono opportunities range from volunteering with Legal Aid to assisting in a judge's chambers to commenting on federal decisions for nonprofits.

The Community Service Program is designed to encourage students to take an active role in their community beyond the law. Through community service activities, students gain a better connection to Portland's nonprofits, build a greater understanding of the needs of the underrepresented, and foster a commitment to becoming the pillars of their community after graduation. Community service activities have ranged from caring for animals in shelters to mentoring high school students to working at food banks.

Participating students are recognized through both a Pro Bono Honors Program and a Community Service Honors Program. Students who do 30 hours of pro bono or community service work over the course of the school year are eligible for these honors awards. Receipt of these awards is listed on a student's transcript, recognized at an awards ceremony, and indicated during graduation.

Stipends for Summer Work

Many public interest organizations have opportunities for law students to work with attorneys over the summer but do not have enough money to pay the students who work with them. For students, the benefits from the experience of working a full-time summer public interest job are hard to match, but the financial implications of working for free can make this difficult. Through the Public Interest Law Project (PILP) student group, Lewis & Clark Law School offers students summer stipends for working in positions that would otherwise be unpaid. Stipend recipients may receive up to \$5,000 for 350 hours of work over 10 weeks, or up to \$2,500 for 175 hours of work. Students have used their stipends to fund their work throughout the Northwest, across the country, and around the world.

The summer stipend program is a wonderful testament to the commitment of Lewis & Clark law students. The program started over 20 years ago when students formed PILP and held an auction to raise funds to allow them to do legal aid work over the summer.

Today, the vast majority of funds are still raised by students in an annual auction with former stipend recipients chairing the committees to raise funds for the next year.

Nancy Alexander '13 is a staff attorney with the Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project in Los Angeles, CA. Her primary work is to defend people in immigration detention with mental illnesses, as well as work with minors in removal proceedings. Prior to joining Esperanza, Nancy worked as at Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services in Portland where she filed U-Visa, VAWA, and DACA applications for victims of domestic violence and children. She was particularly drawn to the opportunity at Esperanza to assist people with complex immigration cases that involve criminal issues.

Nancy received her bachelor's degree in Latin American History with a minor in Spanish from Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA. She developed her Spanish language skills when she studied in Valparaiso, Chile prior to going to law school.



Career Assistance

Lewis & Clark's full-time director of public interest law, who works in the Career and Professional Development Center, advises students and alumni on public service careers and funding options. The following opportunities are also available to help students who plan to pursue a career in public interest law.

Northwest Public Service Career Fairs

Lewis & Clark Law School organizes the Northwest Public Service Career Fairs in Seattle and Portland, bringing together 40 to 50 public interest organizations and government offices in each city to talk to students about their work and the opportunities they have both for student interns and graduating students. Many of the employers conduct job interviews at the career fairs, giving students a convenient place to not only meet the attorneys making a difference in public service careers, but also to find their own public service career. The career fairs are a collaborative effort of the career service offices of 11 western law schools from Arizona to Washington, with the bulk of the planning coming from Lewis & Clark.

Loan Repayment Assistance Program

Lewis & Clark Law School also has a Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) designed to ease the debt burdens of graduates who choose to work in public interest jobs. The school recognizes that such work may be impossible for students with large educational debt. The school has taken a philosophical stance in encouraging public interest work to improve the legal profession. The LRAP program supports access to justice by allowing graduates working in the public interest to make ends meet, and by allowing public interest employers to be able to hire more attorneys within their budgets.

Lewis & Clark helps graduates with incomes up to \$45,000 make their law school loan payments for up to five years after graduation. Awards are based on income level, debt burden, history of public interest work, and type of employment. There is no cap on the dollar amount that can be awarded, and graduates have repeatedly received awards up to their annual loan servicing cost.

Student Organizations

The commitment of students to the public interest has long played a central role in Lewis & Clark Law School's public interest offerings. The Pro Bono Program, Loan Repayment Assistance Program, Public Interest Law Program Summer Stipends, and the Public Interest Certificate were all started, or proposed to the school, by student organizations. Below is a brief sampling of some of the student groups on campus with significant public interest activities.

Environmental Justice Advocates

Environmental Justice Advocates (EJA) partners with and assists local individuals and entities whose communities are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation. EJA works to bring attention to local, national, and international environmental justice issues through a major conference, speakers, and community tours. Students also work on pro bono projects with community partners.

Minority Student Organizations

In addition to arranging social and cultural events, Lewis & Clark's minority law student organizations often participate in local community service events and programs. For example, the Minority Law Student Association (MLSA) and the Black Law Students Association (BLSA) serve as mentors to students at Rosemary Anderson High School, an alternative school in Portland. MLSA and BLSA members help students who have fallen out of the normal education system achieve their best. In the past, law students have also raised funds to create scholarships for Rosemary Anderson High School graduates.

National Lawyers Guild

The National Lawyers Guild (NLG) is dedicated to advocating for progressive change in the structure of our political and economic system. Lewis & Clark Law School's student chapter of the NLG sponsors on-campus speakers and participates in public interest projects each year.

Northwest Environmental Defense Center

The Northwest Environmental Defense Center is an independent, nonprofit organization working to protect the environment and natural resources of the Pacific Northwest. It provides legal support to individuals and grassroots organizations with environmental concerns, and engages in litigation independently or in conjunction with other environmental groups.

Public Interest Law Project

The Public Interest Law Project (PILP) is dedicated to encouraging students to pursue public interest careers by providing summer stipends for students working in public interest law. It also promotes the growth and expansion of the Loan Repayment Assistance Program.

Students Advocating Business and Environmental Responsibility

Students Advocating Business and Environmental Responsibility (SABER) is dedicated to promoting collaboration between environmental advocacy groups, governmental agencies, and the business sector.

Student Animal Legal Defense Fund

The Student Animal Legal Defense Fund (SALDF) works to enhance the welfare and legal status of animals. SALDF hosts the nation's largest annual animal law conference along with Lewis & Clark's Center for Animal Law Studies. Members also actively volunteer in the local community's animal welfare organizations.

Preparing the Next Generation of Lawyers

Lewis & Clark Law School is dedicated to developing the diversity of the next generation of attorneys. To this end, the law school offers two annual events geared toward increasing the diversity of those considering the legal profession.

Summer Law Camp

Each summer, Lewis & Clark hosts a week-long day camp at the law school for middle school students. Taught by faculty and law students, the program targets students who would be the first in their family to attend college and shows them how they can affect the legal system rather than just be on the receiving end of it.

Minority Mock Trial Day

Every February, the diversity and academic resources department organizes a mock trial event for local middle and high school students from economically disadvantaged communities. Current law students and alumni join in to volunteer as advisors and judges.

Information

For more information about the Public Interest Law Program, please visit our website at law.lclark.edu/programs/public_interest_law or contact:

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The law school encourages applications from persons in groups historically underrepresented in the legal profession.

Lewis & Clark Law School is fully accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools. The law school follows the letter and spirit of all equal opportunity and civil rights laws.

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