

THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS LEGAL CLINIC
NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION CLINIC
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The Basics

Graded Credit Hours: Four (4) hours of graded credits

Course Pre-Requisites or Co-Requisites: Professional Responsibility and Evidence should be taken either before the clinic or concurrently with the clinic, although these requirements may be waived in certain circumstances. Requests for waiver should be made in the clinic application.

Course Description

Students in the University of Memphis Neighborhood Preservation Clinic represent the City of Memphis and not-for-profit organizational clients in public nuisance lawsuits filed *in rem* against badly neglected, vacant and abandoned properties. Under faculty and staff supervision, Clinic students investigate property ownership and conditions; communicate with field code enforcement professionals, property owners, opposing attorneys, and neighbors; and research, prepare, file and handle all aspects of civil cases alleging claims arising under the Tennessee Neighborhood Preservation Act, T.C.A. §13-6-101 et seq.

Once litigation is commenced, Clinic students handle cases as they proceed in the Shelby County Environmental Court, a unique court of special jurisdiction concurrent with the Tennessee Circuit and Chancery Courts for certain purposes. Student case handling responsibilities include weekly appearances in the Environmental Court, during which students present at hearings and status settings, negotiate with opposing counsel and owners, and do all else that is necessary to move their cases forward. As their cases evolve, students grapple with the vast array of legal and policy issues implicated in problem property cases.

To complement their casework, Clinic students participate in an orientation and weekly classroom sessions focused on the pervasive challenge of property vacancy and abandonment in Memphis. The seminar segment of the weekly class exposes students to substantive code enforcement, the wide array of issues associated with property ownership and transfer, national models of legal strategies to address problem properties, practice and procedure in the Shelby County Environmental Court, and the issues of ethics, professionalism, and day-to-day file management that arise in their cases. The weekly seminar also includes a case rounds component, during which students engage in an ongoing dialogue about the challenges they are experiencing while managing Clinic cases.

Course Enrollment and Credit

The Neighborhood Preservation Clinic will be open to a maximum of eight (8) students during the Spring 2027 semester. In order to be eligible for enrollment, a student must have completed at least one-half of the legal studies required for graduation and be in good academic standing. Students earn four (4) hours of graded academic credit for their satisfactory completion of the Clinic course.

Why enroll in the Neighborhood Preservation Clinic?

Students in the Neighborhood Preservation Clinic are afforded the opportunity to enhance essential lawyering skills at both the practical and theoretical levels. Through the representation of the City of Memphis and non-profit clients in Environmental Court cases, students examine law and lawyering in the context of real litigation, actively navigating ethical, substantive, procedural, and evidentiary rules, and utilizing the critical skills in research and writing, oral advocacy, problem-solving, strategic decision-making, cultural competency, and persuasion they will need to address the multidimensional needs of clients and serve the legal community following graduation.

RELATION TO BAR EXAM SUBJECTS:

This course exposes students to the substantive doctrine and procedure of Civil Procedure, Constitutional Law, Contracts, Decedents' Estates, Evidence, Professional Responsibility, Property, and Secured Transactions. It also exposes students to aspects of the Multistate Performance Test (MPT).

What Skills Training Does the Neighborhood Preservation Clinic Offer?

Students in the Neighborhood Preservation Clinic develop skills in interviewing, counseling, analysis, and evolution of case theory, legal research and drafting, conducting fact investigation, problem-solving, negotiation, oral advocacy, and courtroom procedure and practice. Students reflect on their experiences in light of issues such as professionalism, diversity, the role of lawyers in social change work and community development, and other questions relating to legal practice. Additionally, skills relating to office, case, and time management are utilized and explored.

Time Requirements: The weekly class component of the Neighborhood Preservation Clinic will meet weekly for one hour and fifty minutes (weekly class time TBA). Extra orientation sessions will be scheduled during the first three weeks of classes to ensure introduction to the Clinic's work, court activities, and procedures. Thereafter, students can expect to spend fifteen (15) hours per week on Clinic case activities, in court, and in class. **Students must commit to a weekly court docket on Thursday morning (10:00-12:30) or Thursday afternoon (1:15-3:45).**