Teaching Legal Research and Writing with Actual Legal Work: Extending Clinical Education into the First Year


Article Categories: Course Creation & Design; Legal Research Instruction for 1Ls; Working with External Stakeholders

Keywords: Access to Justice; Clinics; Course Design; Experiential; Hybrid; Legal Research Instruction; Motivation; Pedagogy; Professional Responsibility

Reviewer’s Summary:

The article proposes that first-year legal research and writing can be more effectively taught by using actual legal work in the classroom. LRW and clinical instructors can work together to create hybrid courses that would incorporate work from clinical cases. Four justifications for this proposal are offered: (1) students will be more motivated to learn research and writing skills because they will take the work more seriously; (2) real legal work serves secondary educational goals such as teaching professional responsibility; (3) the work will engage the students and foster an interest in public service; and (4) more people will be able to obtain access to justice. The authors describe two experimental courses they co-taught using actual legal work. They also discuss some of the challenges of this method and how they responded to those challenges.

Summarized by: Robert Clark, University of Houston Law Center, in 2019.