

# CRIMINAL DEFENSE CLINIC

Fall 2026

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Students enrolled in the semester-long Criminal Defense Clinic (CDC) represent low-income children and adults charged with a variety of municipal ordinance violations and misdemeanor crimes including assault, resisting arrest, disorderly conduct, theft, and others, in Denver and/or surrounding cities. Students learn and apply lawyering skills such as interviewing, building client relationships, client counseling, investigation, legal research and writing, oral advocacy, negotiation, and trial skills and preparation. Students appear regularly in court for hearings such as arraignments, pretrial conferences, motions hearings, and trials. Through classes and representation of clients, students will learn about systemic injustice in the criminal legal system and about the connections between the criminal legal system and trauma, mental health, and a variety of governmental systems and societal factors. Students will also explore issues of forensic science and learn to incorporate them into their work defending clients.

The Criminal Defense Clinic provides an opportunity for students to integrate professional ethics and values, legal theory, and practical skills by representing low-income clients charged with crimes. Learning takes place in the classroom, in supervision sessions with faculty, and in Colorado's courtrooms and jails.

## Prerequisites

Although not required, it is highly recommended that students take **Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, Evidence, and Trial Practice** before or concurrently with the clinic. A demonstrated commitment to public interest law is preferred. To participate in a Student Law Office Clinic, students must complete 30 credit hours by the start of the clinic and have a GPA of 2.3 or higher.

## Class Requirements

Class attendance is required. Classes are expected to meet **Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:15 - 2:55**, location TBD. In addition, students will be required to attend orientation, which will likely begin the week before fall semester classes commence. **Orientation attendance is mandatory.**

Orientation includes simulations and classes scheduled around clinic participants' availability. Students should expect to meet as a class at least once daily for the first two weeks, with significant out-of-class work during this period. Orientation covers the substantive, procedural,

and ethical aspects of criminal defense and familiarizes students with the Student Law Office and Criminal Defense Clinic procedures.

### Credits

Students enroll for the full semester, earning **9 credits in total**. 4 credits are earned through participation in the clinic seminar, and the remaining 5 credits come from clinic-related work outside of class. Participation in both classroom instruction and client work is required throughout the semester.

### Time Commitment

The Criminal Defense Clinic requires a substantial time commitment. Students should expect to spend at least 25 hours per week on client matters, with additional time required depending on the pace of litigation. In addition, students spend at least four hours each week in class and at least five hours each week on class-related work, preparation, supervision meetings with faculty, and other clinic assignments. Given the intensive time commitment of clinic courses as well as the potential for ethical conflicts of interest, **students are not allowed to simultaneously participate in a clinic in the Student Law Office and an externship through the Legal Externship Program or any other experiential course in the law school that involves client work.** Please consult our website [FAQs](#) to review the SLO policy on paid and volunteer work.

### Apply

Applications open **Monday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. and close Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.** on the [Clinical Programs Webpage](#). Applications submissions for the **Criminal Defense Clinic** must include the following:

- *An updated law school resume (pdf)*
- *A law school writing sample of 5 - 10 pages (pdf)*

Students may apply up to two clinics. Late applications will not be accepted.

### Learn More

- [Clinical Programs Webpage FAQs](#) (QR code)
- Instagram [@denver\\_law\\_clinical\\_programs](#)
- LinkedIn [@student-law-office-at-du](#)

