



## **Loyola Project for the Innocent Clinic**

The Loyola Law School Project for the Innocent (LPI) is a nonprofit legal clinic that provides assistance to prison inmates incarcerated on a California state conviction who wish to present a claim of factual innocence. LPI focuses on representing inmates who claim they were wrongfully convicted. This is done after they are no longer represented by counsel.

**Objectives.** The LPI team consists of attorneys, law professors and students, experts and community volunteers who collaborate to pursue the following objectives:

- To provide pro bono legal services to prisoners raising provable claims of actual innocence after being convicted in the California courts;
- To give law students an opportunity to gain professional experience and invaluable “real world” insight into the justice system by working with attorneys, judges, prosecutors, police, forensic experts, and witnesses in seeking to prove the innocence of wrongly convicted prisoners.

**Student Role.** Project Students work directly on inmates’ cases. Responsibilities include deciding which cases the Project will handle, investigating claims of innocence, researching legal issues, drafting petitions for writ of habeas corpus, communicating with and visiting clients in custody, preparing declarations for experts, interviewing witnesses, meeting with prosecutors, and assisting investigators assigned to the case.

## **Overview of LPI**

The Loyola Project for the Innocent (LPI) assists California prisoners who are seeking to advance claims of factual innocence. Large numbers of inmates seek the Project’s help. Much of LPI’s work involves screening inmate requests and identifying cases with viable claims of innocence where there may be new evidence, such as DNA or witness testimony, to support those claims. LPI cases are not limited to those involving DNA evidence.

LPI is a member of the Innocence Network, an affiliation of organizations dedicated to providing pro bono legal and investigative services to individuals seeking to prove innocence of crimes for which they have been convicted, working to redress the causes of wrongful convictions and supporting the exonerated after they are freed.

Each term LPI students begin their work with Orientation. Following this training, we assign students to two supervising attorneys and their cases. The student is responsible for reviewing, evaluating, and advancing inmate claims. The number of cases a student is assigned is based on a variety of factors including case complexity, stage of development, and the number of units of credit sought by the student.



Review of a case often requires at least some re-investigation. After preliminary assessment, the case is either closed or investigated further. Investigation continues until the Project assumes representation of the inmate or the supervisory staff decides to close the case. Clinic students will be involved in all aspects of LPI's work – reading mail, screening cases, investigation, drafting legal documents, advocating for policy reform and other work that assists people who are wrongfully convicted.

## **Course Information**

LPI is a two-semester course that runs through the fall and spring semesters. Students can earn four graded units and four ungraded units for their two semesters of work at LPI. LPI units are not categorized as Internship or Externship units.

### Structure:

(1) Clinic: Students must complete the clinic hours requirement of 10 hours total, with 4 hours in the clinic. The remaining hours may be completed remotely.

(2) Wrongful Conviction Seminar (2 units per semester) provides clinical students with the necessary context of the legal issues surrounding wrongful convictions. First, students will examine current and previous LPI cases to understand the causes of wrongful convictions including police/prosecutorial misconduct, junk science, false confessions, tunnel vision, ineffective assistance of counsel, and eyewitness identification issues. Second, this class will provide an overview of California state Habeas procedure and what claims for relief are available in post-conviction litigation. Lastly, this class will prepare students for casework through practical learning objectives including mock witness interviews, creating investigation plans, drafting declarations, and motion practice.

Grades: LPI is a partially graded course. As with all other law school two-semester courses, students receive their grade at the end of the second semester. If the student takes more than six units, those additional units over six units will be credit or no credit.