Law School Personal Reflections on COVID-19

Law School Experiences of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Fall 2020

Professor Stacy Kern-Scheerer: Reflections on the Fall 2020 Semester

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Professor Stacy Kern-Scheerer

Reflections on the Fall 2020 Semester

What courses did you teach this fall?

I am the Director of the Immigration Clinic, so I taught the Clinic this past semester, which was all 3Ls. I also taught Food & Drug Law, which is a mix of 2Ls and 3Ls. The class sessions for both were remote, but there were some in-person aspects of the Clinic by necessity.

Were you surprised about what you found challenging about teaching this semester?

Because the Clinic is practical, experiential learning, there are particular challenges associated with doing everything remotely. Leading students as they develop the practice skills of doing client intakes, conducting client interviews, gathering evidence, and writing supporting documents for filings has required flexibility and a commitment to doing the best we can under difficult circumstances. I am sure many practicing alumni can relate to the challenges of moving a practice to a remote environment!

For both the podium course and the Clinic, I think the biggest challenge is helping the students feel connected to me and to one another while in class. I always try hard to create classroom environments where everyone feels supported and comfortable speaking up, and I have found it challenging to “read the room” when everyone is on Zoom.

Do you have insights to share about the students you taught this semester?

The students have been incredible this semester with rolling with the punches. Students in Food & Drug Law have been so engaged; they have been showing up prepared, asking questions, meeting with me in office hours, keeping me in the loop with what challenges they are facing. The Clinic students have risen to the challenges in ways that are just amazing; their commitment to the Clinic clients in the face of obstacles has been nothing short of extraordinary.

What do you miss about being in the building?

There is a lot I miss about being in the building! I miss the natural interactions that happen among colleagues and students in the halls. I miss Ms. Sherri in the coffeshop! I also really miss the impromptu team brainstorming sessions that happen when a Clinic student runs into my
office following a development or breakthrough in a case, and we can discuss and spitball on what to do next. These types of exchanges are so valuable (and fun), and they are hard to capture when everyone is apart.

**Do you have hobbies or pastimes that have helped you combat pandemic fatigue?**

My family has prioritized getting outside as much as possible during the pandemic. When we are not working (or in virtual school), we are outside. Thankfully the weather in Williamsburg is generally cooperative. On a daily basis, we spend time in the backyard, where our child can play with the dogs and run around. My family is fortunate in so many ways, and I have never been more thankful for a backyard. We have pitched the tent back there a few times and “gone camping”. On the weekends, we go hiking or kayaking. This will be tougher to maintain with the cooler weather, but we will figure something out.