**INTRODUCTION TO**

**THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CLINIC**

**AT HARVARD LAW SCHOOL**

Through Harvard Law School’s International Human Rights Clinic, students engage with theory and practice to learn core human rights advocacy skills. Working in small teams on pressing and timely human rights issues around the world, students have the opportunity to collaborate with leading international and local human rights organizations and practitioners. Through its projects, the Clinic explores a range of approaches and strategies to advance the interests of clients and affected communities. For example, students may travel to interview survivors and document abuse; undertake legal and factual analysis to write appellate briefs; or build human rights campaigns through media work or policy advocacy. Below are some commonly asked questions about the Clinic’s work.

**What kinds of projects does the Clinic work on?**

The Clinic takes on more than 20 projects a term, often in partnership with major national and international organizations. We work regularly in more than a dozen countries, including the United States. Field missions and advocacy trips are a central part of the Clinic’s activities. This academic year, for example, students documented prison conditions in Brazil; researched and drafted briefs for a U.S. Supreme Court case about corporate accountability for human rights abuses, and assisted with and attended oral argument; interviewed women in preparation for a report about access to reproductive services in the Democratic Republic of Congo; litigated to hold medical professionals accountable for torture in the United States; lobbied in Geneva for stricter arms controls; undertook fieldwork related to the health effects of mining on communities in South Africa; and interviewed refugees in Thailand about the effect of the Burmese military on their lives.

**What are the Clinic’s areas of expertise?**

While we work on many subjects and in numerous countries, the Clinic has several areas of particular expertise where we consistently affect national and international policy. These include:

* Alien Tort Statute Litigation
* Criminal Justice in Latin America
* Weapons and Civilian Protection in Armed Conflict
* Sexual and Reproductive Health
* Health Professionals and Torture
* Business and Human Rights
* Human Rights and the Environment
* Human Rights in Brazil, Burma, and South Africa

**Who works in the Clinic**?

The Clinic has seven clinicians on staff, all of them seasoned practitioners with special knowledge in specific countries and issues. For example, our clinicians have lived and worked in Thailand, South Africa, Brazil, Argentina, and Israel. Together, we have more than 50 years of experience in the field.

**What seminars does the Clinic offer?**

The Clinic offers both introductory and advanced seminars. To enroll in the Clinic for the first time, you must take one of our introductory seminars. For the coming academic year, our clinical offerings are:

Fall 2012

* Gender and Human Rights (Deborah Popowski, Mindy Roseman)
* Combating the Human Costs of Armed Conflict (Bonnie Docherty)
* Advanced Skills Training for Human Rights Advocacy (Tyler Giannini, Susan Farbstein) (*Note: This class is only open to 3Ls who have previously taken the Clinic.*)

Spring 2013

* Human Rights Advocacy and Litigation (Susan Farbstein, Tyler Giannini)
* The Promises and Challenges of Disarmament (Bonnie Docherty)

**I have decided to become a human rights lawyer. How will the Clinic help me get there?**

The Clinic is committed to intensely mentoring students who are interested in launching careers in human rights. As a 2L, you can enroll and begin to explore various human rights issues and strategies to advance the interests of clients and communities. Some students continue to focus on a particular topic or issue for several semesters to gain deep area expertise; others experiment with different projects and skills to gain broad exposure in the field of human rights. As a 3L, you can enroll in the advanced seminar that teaches leadership skills and refines skill sets. Through continuing clinical credits, you can take a leadership role on your clinical projects. We will also work with you to find summer and post-graduate placements in human rights, including through fellowships offered by our Program, the law school, or beyond.

**I am not planning a career in human rights, but have a strong interest in the subject. What does the Clinic have to offer me?**

For those who are considering other careers, the Clinic offers an opportunity for intensive exposure to the field of human rights as well as the chance to learn practical skills that apply in a range of settings. For example, you will learn to make real-life strategic and tactical decisions; to work with clients, communities, and partner organizations; to interview and undertake fact-finding investigations; to advocate, negotiate, and lobby for your positions; to draft treaties, briefs, and reports; and much more.

**Any additional questions?**

Please swing by our office, WCC 3139, to chat with a member of our team.

For more information about our work, please visit our blog, [www.harvardhumanrights.wordpress.com](http://www.harvardhumanrights.wordpress.com), and website, <http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/hrp/>.