<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Professor Susan Deller Ross and Supervising Attorney &amp; Teaching Fellow Catherine Cooper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do students do</td>
<td>Students partner with NGOs to advance women’s human rights by working on test-case litigation for domestic courts and human rights treaty bodies (in the Fall) or participating in a fact-finding trip, writing a human rights report, and drafting legislation (in the Spring).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semester or year-long</td>
<td>One semester, Fall or Spring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open to</td>
<td>All 2Ls, 3Ls, 3Es, and 4Es (with at least 30 credits)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prerequisite(s)</td>
<td>All first year courses and (as a pre- or co-requisite) International and Comparative Law on Women’s Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credits</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Requires Student Bar</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How many students</td>
<td>8/semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflicts</td>
<td>Handled on a case-by-case basis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average time commitment</td>
<td>35 hours/week, on average. Work on projects will continue throughout the exam period. Spring semester students must also be able to travel abroad during the spring break for a fact-finding project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar hours</td>
<td>Tuesday 3:30-5:30 p.m. &amp; Friday 3:30-5:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Each semester, all students are required to return one week early for pre-semester orientation sessions.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Information session(s)      | Friday, March 26, 2021 1:30pm - 3:00pm
Students are also welcome to contact Prof. Susan Deller Ross (662-9641; ross@law.georgetown.edu) for more information, or Supervising Attorney Catherine Cooper (catherine.cooper@georgetown.edu) |
IWHRC CLINIC OVERVIEW

Under the guidance of Professor Susan Deller Ross and Supervising Attorney & Teaching Fellow Catherine Cooper, 2021-2022 Clinic students will spend a semester developing human rights advocacy skills while working on an international women’s human rights project with a non-governmental organization (NGO). The clinic partner is most often based in an African country but some clinic partners are located in other parts of the world (e.g., the Philippines, Poland, the Middle East, Latin America). In the fall semester, students work on test-case litigation projects and write a substantial brief; in the spring, they go on fact-finding trips, and write human rights reports and legislative bills. The clinic may also work with regional and international bodies on country- or theme-specific submissions, or individual complaints, as in the Tanzania case for the evicted widows (see page 3 case highlights). All these projects require students to work intensively with international and regional human rights treaties.

All human rights treaties require equality between men and women and equal protection of the law. Nations ratify these treaties but may not fully comply with their treaty obligations to change or implement laws to provide equality. Many of these laws curtail women’s opportunities and condemn women, and frequently their children, to a life of subordination and destitution. Every project addresses violations of these treaties. Governments routinely violate their duty to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, and punish violations of women’s human rights to equality, life, health, liberty, security of the person, and freedom from cruel treatment by leaving in place laws and practices that subject women to many forms of violence and discrimination. Past semester students have addressed these human rights violations in working on such issues as female genital mutilation/cutting, so-called “honor” crimes (murders of women by family members), polygamy, brideprice, human trafficking, domestic servitude, domestic violence, marital rape, the denial of women’s right to own or inherit land and property, and laws and policies denying girls and women equal rights in education, employment, and reproductive health services. Student projects apply national, comparative, regional, and international human rights law. If efforts to win equal rights through litigation or legislation do not succeed at the national level, the Clinic and its partners can then pursue protection before regional and international human rights bodies, such as the U.N. Human Rights Committee or the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Partner NGO lawyers and clinic faculty collaboratively choose the projects and supervise the work. Students work closely with women’s human rights lawyers and organizations in the relevant country to develop policy, strategy, and proposed legislation or court papers. They exchange drafts of their work with each other and with their international partners by email, and they teleconference with their international partners frequently. Students also have many opportunities to improve their interviewing and oral advocacy skills through formal class presentations, reviews of their performance, in-country spring fact-finding interviews, and a final simulated hearing before a court or a mock presentation to a legislative or international body.

CLINIC SEMINAR AND SUPERVISION

In the Clinic’s twice-weekly two-hour seminars, students study the host country’s laws or comparative laws and their context, learn how to research international and comparative law and conduct that research, present drafts of their work in progress, critique each other’s work, and develop interviewing and oral and writing advocacy skills. Outside the classroom, supervisors work with individual students and teams to provide in-depth guidance on a variety of skills, including setting agendas, holding professional teleconferences, conducting interviews, developing written legal arguments, and persuading an intended audience. During the semester, each student completes a minimum of three complete drafts of his or her Clinic project, which typically includes: (1) during the fall semester, litigation papers for a domestic court including a legal brief, affidavits, and petition or notice of appeal; or, occasionally, submissions to human rights bodies; and (2) during the spring semester, a legislative bill and supporting human rights report.
FALL SEMESTER IWHRC STUDENT AND PROJECT EXPERIENCE

In the Fall semester, students work on constitutional and human rights test-case litigation in a national court or submissions to international human rights monitoring bodies, such as the UN Human Rights Committee or the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

A recent fall semester Student Advocate who prepared a case to be filed in the Botswana High Court had this to say about her participation in the clinic:

“My experience with the International Women’s Human Rights Clinic uniquely prepared me for my current work as a human rights lawyer. Building a strategic litigation case challenging laws permitting child marriage in Botswana gave me the opportunity to practice and hone the legal skills I use every day, including legal research and writing, developing creative arguments, identifying potential clients, and building strong relationships with international partners. I owe so much of the lawyer I am today to the mentorship and experiences I gained through this Clinic.”

– Amanda Strayer

The work of Fall semester students has led to some significant victories in court. The following linked stories highlight some of them:

Unfair Marital Power System in Africa Negated — Thanks to International Women’s Human Rights Clinic – IWHRC Students have helped an African women’s rights advocacy group to mount a successful legal challenge to a discriminatory marital law regime in Eswatini (formerly Swaziland).

IWHRC Students Work Pays Off for Mothers, Children in Kenya – IWHRC Students helped persuade the Kenyan High Court to strike down laws that permitted unmarried fathers to avoid all forms of child support and that imposed financial and legal obligations to care for children solely on their mothers.

IWHRC Students won case before the UN CEDAW Committee related to discriminatory customary inheritance laws and practices in Tanzania.

Clinic students also helped win right to divorce for women in Uganda’s Constitutional Court:

In March 2004, as IWHRC students and faculty sat in the courtroom, the justices of the Constitutional Court of Uganda read their decisions from the bench. The next day’s Kampala Monitor newspaper (pictured above) sensationalized the holding, but what the court had done was spectacular for a different reason: for the first time, Uganda’s Constitutional Court had used the gender equity provisions in the
Ugandan Constitution and in human rights treaties to invalidate a discriminatory law. The court extended to wives the same right to divorce an adulterous spouse as husbands – a right previously only given to men and of great importance in the era of rampant HIV/AIDS. The attorneys of Law and Advocacy for Women – Uganda (LAW-U) had won an amazing victory (see photo below taken in the Constitutional Courtroom just before the decision was handed down). But it was a victory for the Georgetown’s International Women’s Human Rights Clinic as well: the case had begun life as a joint project between IWHRC and LAW-U. Clinic students drafted the Constitutional Court petition and brief, working in tandem with the lawyers who later filed the case in Uganda.

These cases are typical of the kind of work students do in the fall semester. Students have worked on similar challenges to many different discriminatory laws, ranging from criminal adultery laws that apply only to women, to laws permitting men to practice polygamy, to laws that deny women the right to inherit land and other property.

When one student learned of her team’s victory before the CEDAW Committee in the case highlighted above challenging Tanzanian inheritance laws, she wrote:

“The International Women’s Human Rights Clinic was one of the most transformative experiences of my time at Georgetown Law. Not only did I gain substantive knowledge of international women’s human rights law, but I honed my legal research, writing, and professional skills. The practical tools and advocacy skills I gained translated seamlessly into my current career as a litigator. Additionally, the clinic affirmed my belief that international women’s human rights work is essential, and I continue to use the substantive knowledge I gained in my pro bono practice.”

– Mason Hubbard (now practicing law at DLA Piper)

Reflecting on his experience writing a brief on behalf of a woman who was threatened with execution for so-called adultery, another student said:

“I learned more about being a lawyer in one semester of the IWHR Clinic than I have in the rest of law school combined.”

– Alexandros Papanikolaou, who worked on an amicus brief in support of an appeal to the Nigerian Supreme Court to overturn a death sentence for a woman convicted of adultery under Muslim law.
Another issue that frequently arises in Clinic projects is polygamy, a practice denounced by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women because “polygamous marriage contravenes a woman’s right to equality with men, and can have such serious emotional and financial consequences for her and her dependents that such marriages ought to be discouraged and prohibited.” One student reported of her work on this issue:

“The Clinic was amazing on so many levels. Not only as a law school class did I learn more in this past semester than I ever would have anticipated, but, and more importantly, it was a great feeling to actually be able to use the law in order to improve the lives of others. It was wonderful that at the end of the semester instead of having a grade on an exam, we have produced an end product that will directly benefit the lives of women in South Africa.”
– Maeve K Townsend, a fall semester Student Advocate who prepared a constitutional challenge against the practice of polygyny in South Africa.

SPRING SEMESTER IWHRC STUDENT AND PROJECT EXPERIENCE

In the spring semester, clinical work includes a fact-finding trip to work with in-country partners to interview people about the effects of discriminatory laws and practices. Students then draft human rights reports and legislation. Former spring semester Student Advocates have said:

“The opportunity to participate in the IWHRC was one of the main reasons I chose to come to Georgetown, and it lived up to all my expectations . . . . My work in the clinic trained me in many of the investigatory and advocacy skills necessary in crafting a human rights campaign, and solidified my techniques in making arguments that are not just morally forceful, but also legally compelling.”
– Eric Tars, Eric traveled to Ghana with the clinic to conduct fact-finding interviews for a report and proposed bill on integrating Queenmothers (traditional women leaders) into the National House of Chiefs. The Ghana Government has now begun accepting the Queenmothers as equal participants with equal pay in both the Regional and National Houses of Chiefs.

“Our fact-finding trip to Uganda about FGM allowed us to understand how much the issue involves members of the family and what political context this recommendation is going to go through . . . . I learned everything from actual tangible legal skills to analytical skills to skills that apply to discussions about culture and tradition that are so relevant to this historical moment in which we’re living – when politics, and women’s bodies, and the concept of culture interact.”
– Adriana Kertzer, spring semester Student Advocate who drafted a human rights report and legislation to combat female genital mutilation in Uganda, which spurred the enactment of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act, 2010
Student Advocates Eric Holleran and Allison Carlon with Supervising Attorney & Teaching Fellow Michelle Liu, local supervisor Hillary Tembo, and Inspector Fanny Chimbaya in front of a Child Justice Court in Lilongwe, Malawi.

Student Advocate Nicolas Mitchell with local attorney supervisor, Sibonelo Mdluli, of Women and Law in Southern Africa – Swaziland (now, Eswatini), preparing to interview participants at a rural community gathering. His team was exploring the laws and practices that denied women access to communal land and private property.
Professor Ross with supervisors Brian Tronic, Kristie Bluett, and Nancy Stafford and Clinic Office Manager Briana Hauser visiting the “Source of the River Nile” in Uganda.

Clinic Office Manager Desiree Luckey and Clinic Student Advocates Kristen Maryn, Brenna Sparks, Amanda Monaco, Stacey Eunnae, Corrinne Henneberg, and Michelle Liu on safari in Tanzania after a long week of fact-finding interviews.

Clinic supervisors on their day off—tracking rhinos in Botswana.
During the 2020 fall semester, students prepared test-case litigation with partners in Lesotho to challenge the discriminatory laws and practices in inheritance, child marriage, criminalization of abortion, and harassment.

In Spring 2020, IWHR Clinic Student Advocates traveled to Malawi to conduct interviews on the human rights impacts of criminal laws on abortion and sexual violence against children. Students then presented their fact-finding results and legislative proposals on access to safe abortion and freedom from sexual violence in Malawi to a global audience.

Watch the Spring 2020 IWHR Clinic Student Advocates presentations
Read more about the Spring 2020 Clinic semester

Students in the Fall 2019 semester also focused on Malawi and worked on litigation projects to challenge laws related to polygamous marriage, defilement, criminalization of abortion, and the use of corroboration and cautionary rules which prevent successful rape prosecutions.

In the Spring of 2019, students traveled to Botswana to explore the effects of the marriage and divorce laws that deny wives married under customary and religious law equal rights with their husbands. They also examined a Constitutional provision that permits sex discrimination in marriage, divorce, inheritance, and customary laws.

In Fall 2018, clinic students worked on test-case litigation for Botswana’s High Court. The litigation projects challenged marriage and divorce statutes that denied wives in customary and religious marriages equal rights with their husbands. For wives married under customary or religious laws, their husbands had the right to own and control all property acquired during their marriages, to forbid their wives from working, to treat them as though they were children, and to have sole power to make decisions about their children. Further, for women in a customary marriage who sought a customary divorce, the customary law favored men in obtaining divorces, getting custody of the children, and receiving most of the couple’s property.

During the 2018 spring semester, students travelled to Uganda, where they interviewed about 80 people about the human rights violations caused by customary and religions laws permitting men to practice polygamy and the many harms it causes wives and children, leaving wives subordinate and both the women and children poverty-stricken. They also explored the effects of a ban on sexual education in schools. The persons interviewed included victims of these human rights violations, NGO activists, human rights organizations, lawyers, journalists, government ministers and staff, judges, members of Parliament, and other stakeholders. The fact-finding interviews allow students to understand the problem in depth and to write powerful human rights reports, effective legislation, and persuasive arguments to adopt the legislation.

Although projects, topics, and host countries vary from semester to semester, all emphasize the application of international, regional, and national human rights standards in the domestic context and all require extensive comparative analysis with such standards in other countries.
TIME COMMITMENT

The average weekly time commitment for the Clinic is 35 hours per week. Because this is a significant time commitment, Clinic faculty urge you to carefully consider and limit - to the extent possible - your other time commitments during the semester you are in the Clinic. We require students in both the fall and spring semesters to return to school one week before the beginning of classes for a pre-semester orientation.

SELECTION CRITERIA/APPLICATION PROCESS

Application Process, Prerequisites, Orientation, and MPRE Exam Conflict

The clinic is open to students who will have completed 30 credits by the beginning of the semester in which they are enrolled in the clinic. To enroll in the International Women’s Human Rights Clinic, students must also have already taken or be concurrently taking International and Comparative Law on Women’s Human Rights, taught by Prof. Ross. This course teaches Clinic students the international, regional, and comparative human rights law they need to know to complete their Clinic projects. The International/Comparative course is offered in the Fall 2021 semester only, so Clinic students who have not yet taken it must enroll in it for the Fall 2021 semester.

Spring students must be available to work abroad during the spring break week on their clinic project. Students’ costs for the spring fact-finding trip are covered; there is no additional fee. Because the March MPRE exam often coincides with Georgetown’s spring break, students should make sure to take the MPRE on a different exam date in August or November. Students should also be aware that some states require a student to sit for and pass the MPRE before taking the bar exam. Some legal employers may require the same thing. It is the student’s responsibility to determine before accepting a space in the spring Clinic what rules apply in the state where they plan to take the bar and what their employer may require, and to arrange to take the MPRE on a date that doesn’t conflict with the Clinic’s fact-finding trip.

In both semesters, all students must return to the Law Center a week before classes begin to attend the mandatory week of orientation classes.

Interested students must select the IWHRC on the online application and submit an IWHRC-specific statement of interest. Details about the online application and deadline can be found by going to https://www.law.georgetown.edu/experiential-learning/clinics/clinic-eligibility-and-registration/.

Selection Criteria

We select students on the basis of their statement of interest in the IWHRC and demonstrated experience and/or interest in women’s human rights. Students who have not had any academic or professional experience in the area of women’s human rights will still be strong candidates if they convey their interest and enthusiasm for the subject area. We also give preference to students entering their final year of law school and to Global Law Scholars.
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about the Clinic, please feel free to contact Prof. Ross (ross@law.georgetown.edu) or Supervising Attorney Catherine Cooper (catherine.cooper@georgetown.edu). Also, please feel free to contact the following students currently enrolled in the Clinic or who have recently taken it and are still students here:

**SPRING 2021**
Grace Edwards  
Dalia Elmelige  
Katrina Hatahet  
Erum Kidwai  
Lia Mazzarella  
Sam Miller  
Myunghee Tuttle  
Drew Robertson

**FALL 2020**
Alex Beaulieu  
Madeleine Cane  
Ashley Collins  
Quinlan Cummings  
Lauren Konczos  
Chloe Peeples  
Kathryn Randolph  
Simon Wentzell