

Racial Equity in Education Policy Clinic

Faculty	Prof. Janel George
What students do	Students will engage in policy and legislative advocacy on behalf of non-profit organizations to advance racial equity in education. Student work may address a variety of issues that impact students of color in schools, including police presence in schools, school segregation, school choice, assessments, post-COVID-19 school re-opening, and school finance and resources. Students will work on behalf of non-profit organizations to address one or more issues impacting students of color in education. Students will employ a range of policy strategies to address organizational clients' priorities, including legislative research and analysis, public education, oral and written advocacy, and coalition-building. Students will engage in advocacy at the federal, state, and local levels on behalf of clients. In addition to advocacy on behalf of clients, students may also engage in community education and collaboration related to racial equity in education. Student work will involve a range of legislative lawyering skills, cut across many education issues, and explore a commitment to, and strategies for securing and advancing racial justice.
Semester or year-long	Semester-long (Spring only)
Open to	All 2Ls and 3Ls (at least 30 credits)
Prerequisites	All first year courses. A course on civil rights and congressional or administrative procedure or statutory interpretation (such as Congressional Procedure, Government Processes, The Regulatory State, Lawmaking, or Administrative Law) is recommended but not required.
Credits	10
Requires Student Bar Certification	No
How many students	8/semester
Conflicts	Handled on a case-by-case basis
Average time commitment	35 hours/week, on average. Work on projects may continue one week beyond the last day of classes.
Seminar hours	Fall Semester: TBD Spring Semester: Tuesday/Thursday TBD
Orientation	MANDATORY. Three-day orientation (Racial Justice in k-12 Public Education/Policy Advocacy 101) before the semester begins.
Information session(s)	Monday, April 5 from 2:00 - 3:00 pm or email jag233@georgetown.edu to make an appointment. (Zoom)

OVERVIEW

The Racial Equity in Education Policy (REEP) Clinic is Georgetown's newest clinic. The Clinic focuses on leveraging legislative and policy advocacy—through tools such as legislative analysis, oral and written advocacy, and coalition-building—on behalf of non-profit organizational clients to advance racial equity in public education. The Clinic is grounded in the recognition that today's educational inequities along racial lines are not aberrations, but are manifestations of this nation's history of slavery,

de jure and *de facto* segregation, and systemic racism embedded in law and public policy.

The Clinic explores the complexities of educational inequalities along racial lines and the potential of public policy to help eradicate them. The Clinic will examine a range of issues that impact the educational experiences and outcomes of students of color, including segregation, school choice, assessments, school discipline (including the presence of school police), and resource inequities.

Clinic students will work in teams of 2 or 3 to represent non-profit organizations working to advance educational justice. This work may entail writing and/or delivery public testimony, writing white papers or public comment letters, researching legal issues, drafting proposed legislative language, analyzing proposed legislation, and participating in coalitions. The Clinic experience reinforces creative problem-solving, collaboration, relationship-building (particularly with partner organizations and policymakers), reflective lawyering, and culturally competent advocacy. The Clinic does not engage in litigation, but there may be opportunities to partner with other clinics engaged in education-related legislation to develop and advance policy recommendations aligned with litigation efforts. The Clinic seeks to foster an environment of collegiality, mutual respect, strong work ethic, professionalism, vulnerability, trust, and good humor.

Through the seminar component of the Clinic, students learn about critical race theory and how to apply it to interrogate the ways that law and public policy perpetuate racial inequality in education. This theory recognizes that racism is endemic to American society and that systems—like legal and political systems—can function to deepen or eradicate racial inequality. Students will reflect upon how policies that appear “race neutral” can have profound implications for racial inequality. Seminars will cover subjects such as the origins of racial inequality in education, cultural competency, and the roles of law and public policy in advancing racial justice.

What does racial equity mean?

Racial equity necessitates acknowledgment of the ways historic discrimination and White Supremacy have impacted the status of people of color in the United States. In the context of education, this includes acknowledgment of the history of laws prohibiting enslaved Black people from learning to read or write, the assimilation and subjugation of Native American students, exclusion of Latinx students from education, and the fabrication of the “Model Minority Myth” that obscures the needs of Asian American students. This discrimination has very real impacts on contemporary educational inequality, particularly because inequality is embedded into institutions and systems (like the legal and legislative systems). Recognizing that discrimination is not a vestige of the past, but persistent and malleable, is vital to identifying and ultimately eradicating racial inequality in education. Equity does not demand that all students have the same things, but—particularly given historical and current discrimination—that minoritized students are provided with the supports and services that they have been (and are being) deprived of in order to thrive and succeed in school.

What is Critical Race Theory?

Critical race theory (CRT) is a practice of interrogating the way that systems, laws, and policies perpetuate racial inequality in the United States. CRT is an evolving and malleable practice. It critiques how the social construction of race and institutionalized racism perpetuate a racial caste system that relegates people of color to the bottom tiers. It acknowledges that the legacy of slavery, segregation, and the imposition of second-class citizenship on Black Americans and other people of color continue to permeate the social fabric of this nation. CRT transcends a Black/white racial binary and recognizes that racism has impacted the experiences of various people of color, including Latinx, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. Most significantly, critical race theorists recognize that, while the law and policy can

be used to deepen racial inequality, they can also be tools for emancipation and for securing racial equality. Clinic students will apply a CRT lens to interrogate ways that racial inequality manifests in the U.S. public education system. Clinic students will examine ways that public policy can be leveraged to help eradicate persistent racial inequality in public education.

What is legislative lawyering?

Legislative lawyers are essentially creative problem-solvers who draw upon resources—including research, legislative history, and public narrative—to devise innovative and effective policy interventions. There are several avenues that legislative lawyers can take to achieve client goals—including public testimony, white papers, and meetings with elected officials. Clinic students act as legislative lawyers on behalf of non-profit clients in need of legislative support at the federal, state, and local levels.

REEP Clients

Students in the REEP Clinic will engage in policy advocacy on behalf of non-profit organizations committed to eradicating racial inequality in education. A Clinic client may be a coalition comprised of several organizations working on issues of racial inequality in education. Clients may also include individual racial justice or education organizations engaged in policy advocacy. Finally, clinic clients may include legal organizations addressing issues racial equity in education. For these organizations, students will partner with organizational attorneys to advance policy priorities that could be related to litigation, such as school desegregation cases. The Clinic will work with two organizational clients. Clinic students will work in groups of 2 or 3 to advance client policy priorities.

REEP Seminar

The Clinic seminar will cover topics such as critical race theory, culturally competent representation, and the organization and operation of federal, state, and local legislative bodies. The seminar will address the range of skills that are necessary to provide effective client representation, including client interviewing and communication. In addition to other activities, students will engage in simulations that will prepare them to engage in legislative and policy advocacy. The seminar will also cover key areas of substantive law that implicate racial equity in education, such as constitutional law and administrative law. Finally, the seminar will provide opportunities for students to engage with expert practitioners (e.g., congressional and state legislative staff, executive branch or agency officials, civil rights attorneys, and other advocates).

Student Learning Goals & Competencies

Through seminar, supervision, reflection, individually-tailored learning, and interactions with clients, students in the REEP Clinic will:

1. Learn about critical race theory and its application as a legal and policy framework for contextualizing, interrogating, and analyzing educational inequities impacting students of color and proposed policy interventions.
2. Learn and articulate the historical context of racial inequality in this country and its influence on educational inequities impacting the k-12 educational experiences and outcomes of students of color.
3. Establish direct relationships with clients and provide excellent, client-centered policy advocacy that increases clients' knowledge of public policy and the legislative process and supports organizational capacity-building.
4. Understand the consequences of ineffective legislative drafting and implementation and identify ways to remedy destructive laws and policies.
5. Enhance their oral and written communication skills and ability to translate complex legislative

and policy issues to a variety of audiences (including policymakers, clients, and the general public) to advance policy goals.

6. Reflect introspectively and learn from experience, think critically, and act with integrity and transparency.
7. Develop the ability to design and support evidence-based legislative/policy interventions that are responsive to clients' needs.
8. Appreciate the complexity of working for racial justice, the challenges inherent in the work, and faith that they have the capacity to make a difference in advancing racial equity in education.
9. Develop coalition-building skills, including the ability to identify areas of common ground and ways to compromise without sacrificing clients' goals.

LEGISLATIVE LAWYERING SKILLS

TYPICAL CLINIC STUDENT WORK	
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment letters • Office for Civil Rights complaints • Meetings with federal agency staff
Legislative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research legislative history • Analyze legislative language • Draft proposed legislative language • Meet with policymakers and staff • Draft written testimony and deliver oral public testimony • Follow appropriations process/budget procedure (at federal, state, and local levels) • Attend congressional and local hearings and bill markups • Help to support a congressional briefing
Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in relevant coalitions • Build partnerships • Draft and secure cosigners for coalition letters • Engage in public education (including speaking at school board meetings, conferences, and town halls)
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in written and oral advocacy (including drafting proposed committee report language, legislative alerts for client organizations, fact sheets, and op-eds) • Engage in creative public policy problem-solving
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview clients • Conduct research • Analyze law and policy • Draft memoranda <p>Clinic work may encompass the following areas of substantive law:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional law • Administrative law • Congressional Process • Civil Rights • Public Education law • Professional Responsibility

TIME COMMITMENT

The REEP Clinic requires substantial commitment and dedication. This includes an orientation program prior to the first week of the semester, preparation for and interaction with clients, and community education. Students will also spend time getting up-to-speed on areas of law and legislative research related to client projects. Students are expected to dedicate about 35 hours per week to their clinic work, but given the vicissitudes of the legislative process, the hours may be more or less in a given week. The Clinic is designed to prepare students for legislative lawyering work and ensure that they are comfortable with shifting priorities and contexts that may necessitate a change in strategy just as they may encounter in practice.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The REEP Clinic has slots for up to 8 students for Spring 2022. In addition to the general clinic application due online, you must email a letter of interest (no more than 1 page) that outlines your interest in the Clinic and any relevant experience related to addressing racial equity in education to Professor George at jag233@georgetown.edu on or before the general application deadline.

FACULTY & FELLOWS

Prior to joining Georgetown Law's clinical faculty, Professor **Janel George** was a Senior Policy Advisor with the Learning Policy Institute where she co-led the Equitable Resources and Access team. Her work focused on racial equity, education as a civil right, school segregation, resource equity and school finance reform, community schools, and other issues that shape equity and access in K-12 education. She is co-author on the report *The Federal Role and School Integration: Brown's Promise and Present Challenges*, with Linda Darling-Hammond.

She has over a decade of experience working on legislative and policy advocacy and analysis, including as a legal fellow and counsel with several non-profits. She also served as Legislative Counsel in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, during which time her legislative portfolio included civil rights, judiciary, child welfare, health care, and education issues.

As Senior Education Policy Counsel with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), she managed a broad range of education issues and worked with several campaigns and coalitions. She co-authored the report *Unlocking Opportunity for African American Girls: A Call to Action for Educational Equity*, as well as law review articles on race and gender and the school-to-prison-pipeline. She also helped to advance the federal policy work of the Dignity in Schools Campaign (DSC), including securing provisions to support positive and inclusive school climates in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

She began her legal career as a Women's Law and Public Policy Fellow with Georgetown University Law Center. She is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School, where she served as a Managing Editor of the Wisconsin Law Review, and Spelman College.

In addition to Professor George, a clinical teaching fellow will be joining the Clinic.

MORE INFORMATION

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to connect Professor George at jag233@georgetown.edu. She will be happy to discuss the Clinic with you.