

# Plan Your Own Path

CRIMINAL LAW



## **OVERVIEW**

Students interested in a career in criminal law may focus on criminal litigation or criminal justice policy.

Students who pursue criminal litigation practice may become prosecutors, defense lawyers, or judges in courts that handle criminal cases. Prosecutors enforce state and local laws as assistant district attorneys or city prosecutors. They may also work for the federal government in the Department of Justice, for example as Assistant U.S. Attorneys. Criminal defense attorneys may work as solo practitioners, as members of a law firm, or in a public defender's office. Some

*This guide tracks the three sides of the triangle.*

### **TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES**

Enroll in foundational courses during your first and second year, such as:

- Criminal Law
- Constitutional Criminal Procedure: Investigation
- Constitutional Criminal Procedure: Adjudication
- Texas Criminal Procedure (if practicing in Texas)
- Trial Advocacy or Trial Techniques I
- Evidence

### **Recommended Courses – Criminal Law Electives:**

- Advanced Criminal Law
- Circumstantial Evidence in Murder Trials
- Comparative Law II: Criminal Procedure
- Criminal Justice Policy Practicum
- Criminal Plea Negotiations
- Criminal Procedure in the Digital Age
- Criminal Tax Fraud
- Death Penalty Project
- Domestic Violence: Law, Policy, and Practice
- Police Misconduct Litigation
- Sentencing and the Death Penalty
- White Collar Crime
- Juvenile Justice

### **Related Courses:**

- International Criminal Law (EW)
- International Humanitarian Law (EW)
- Law and Social Science (EW)
- Perspectives on Counter-Terrorism (EW)
- Second Amendment and Weapons Regulation (EW)

### **CLIENT-CENTERED RELATIONAL SKILLS AND PROBLEM SOLVING**

Experiential opportunities are excellent ways to cultivate client-centered representation, innovative problem-solving, and effective communication skills.

- **Externships:** The following externships are offered through the Government and Public Interest Externship Program (includes classroom component)
  - Central Intelligence Agency Office of General Counsel
  - Collin County District Attorney's Office
  - Dallas County District Attorney's Office
  - Dallas County Public Defender's Office
  - Denton County District Attorney's Office
  - Department of Defense Office of General Counsel
  - Department of Justice Counterterrorism Section
  - Federal Bureau of Investigation
  - Federal Public Defender
  - Harris County District Attorney's Office
  - International Law Externships (International Criminal Court and Tribunal Externships)
  - Lone Star Justice Alliance
  - Plano City Attorney's Office
  - Rockwall County District Attorney's Office
  - Tarrant County District Attorney's Office
  - U.S. Attorney's Office (N.D. Tex.-- Dallas)
  - U.S. Attorney's Office (E.D. Tex – Plano)
  - US Department of Homeland Security – ICE
  - US Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration

Many of the judicial externships involve courts that hear both criminal and civil cases.

- **Clinics:**
  - Criminal Clinic
  - Child Advocacy Clinic
  - Crimes Against Women Clinic
  - Innocence Clinic

Be sure to work closely with your Office of Career

- **Public Service Opportunities:** These pre-approved placements at 501(c)(3) organizations and government offices may provide you with additional perspectives that are valuable to your career development.
  - Bexar County District Attorney's Office
  - City of Fort Worth
  - Collin County District Attorney's Office
  - Plano City Attorney's Office
  - Dallas County District Attorney's Office
  - Dallas County Public Defender's Office
  - Decarceration Collective
  - Denton County District Attorney's Office
  - Federal Bureau of Investigation
  - Harris County District Attorney's Office
  - Innocence Project of Texas
  - Lone Star Justice Alliance
  - Montgomery County District Attorney's Office
  - North Richland Hills City Attorney's Office
  - Pima County Attorney's Office
  - Rockwall County District Attorney's Office
  - SMU Deason Center
  - Tarrant County District Attorney's Office
  - Texas Civil Rights Project
  - Texas Fair Defense Project
  - Texas Indigent Defense Commission
  - Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
  - Texas State Counsel for Offenders
  - U.S. Attorney's Office, EDTX
  - U.S. Attorney's Office, NDTX
  - U.S. Department of Homeland Security – Immigration and Customs Enforcement
  - U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration
  - U.S. Federal Public Defender, NDTX
  
- **Board of Advocates:**
  
- **Law Journals:**
  - Author a note or comment on a criminal law topic and seek to have it published in one of our journals or elsewhere
  
- **Dallas Bar Association Sections:** Explore your interests and immerse yourself in the legal profession by becoming part of these Dallas Bar Association sections.
  - Criminal Law

**Faculty:** Start building a connection with a professor who is familiar with your work and can write you a letter of recommendation or serve as a reference. Here are some of the full-time faculty members who teach in this field.

Hillel Bavli (evidence)  
Jeff Kahn (counter-terrorism)  
Pamela Metzger (right to counsel)  
Natalie Nanasi (domestic violence)

Anna Offit  
Eric Ruben  
Meghan Ryan  
Jenia Turner (domestic and international)

**Cultivate Your Personal Network:** Reach out to criminal law practitioners attorneys to arrange informational interviews through the Mustang Exchange or connections you establish during your law school journey. You should also ask your Career Services advisor to help you identify graduates and law firms in this space in the location(s) where you want to work.

Full-time and adjunct professors who teach criminal law courses may have strong networks. Ask them for assistance making these connections.

Attend programs featuring criminal law attorneys sponsored by the Office of Career Services or student organizations. These programs are great opportunities to learn more about entry-level careers and connect with speakers who are often alumni and more willing to assist you.