

Court Observation – Problem-Solving Courtsⁱ

LAWS 5323

Syllabus

Prof. Colene F. Robinson, 492-0166

Colene.robinson@colorado.edu

Class: Mondays 3 to 4:50 p.m. Room 330

January 14 Introduction to the Course and Overview

Reading: John S. Goldkamp, The Drug Court Response: Issues and Implications for Justice Change, 63 Alb. L. Rev. 923 (2000)

Observation: Observe an hour of court, either civil or criminal. You can find information about the Boulder District Court docket at http://www.courts.state.co.us/Courts/County/Dockets.cfm?County_ID=62

January 28 Mental Health Court
Judge KJ Moore, 1st Judicial District

Observation: Mental Health Court, 100 Jefferson County Parkway, Golden, CO 80401, Courtroom 3F on 3rd Floor, every Tuesday from 2 pm to 6pm

February 11 Drug Court
Judge Whalen, 20th Judicial District
Judge Meinster, 1st Judicial District

Reading: Colorado Problem-Solving Courts (handout)

Observation: Drug Court. Criminal – Boulder, 1777 Sixth Street, Tuesdays at 10 and every other Thursday at 2:45 (2/7; 2/21) Division 13
Civil - Jefferson County- 100 Jefferson County Parkway, Golden, Courtroom 4c on 4th floor, every Thursday starting at 1:30

Assignment: Turn in journals

February 25 Drug Court

Observation: Drug Court

March 11 Restorative Justice Program
Abigail Whipple, University of Colorado Office of Student Conduct

Observation: Community representative, for the Community Accountability Board. Mondays-Thursdays from 6:30pm-7:30 and 7:30pm-8:30.

April 1 Teen Court

Observation: There are no teen courts in Longmont or Boulder. Call these courts before you go, but you may visit:

1. Brighton Municipal Court, Teen Court coordinator, 3401 E. Bromley Lane, Brighton, CO 80601, 303-655-2083
2. Arvada Teen Court, <http://arvada.org/about-arvada/teen-court>
3. The Aurora Teen Court holds sessions in Division 7 of the Aurora Municipal Justice Center located at 14999 E. Alameda Parkway, Aurora, CO 80012. Sessions are scheduled every Wednesday afternoon during the school year. The courtroom opens at 4 p.m. and the sessions generally end at 6:15 p.m. Visitors are welcome to selected Teen Court sessions; those interested in visiting should contact the Teen Court office at 303-739-6544 for further information.
4. Parker teen court, Wed or Thurs evenings, website: <http://www.parkeronline.org/index.aspx?NID=71>
5. There is a teen court in Colorado Springs if anyone wants to travel that far.

April 15 Lawyer Panel – practicing in problem solving courts

Reading: “Reflections – The work keeps going.” A piece on Denver’s Community Court failure (handout)

Assignment: Turn in journals

Class structure:

The first hour of class, generally, will be discussion of the court observation you conducted the week before. The second hour of class will introduce the next type of court you will be observing.

Grading:

This class is a one credit, pass/fail course. You will pass if you attend, participate, and complete assignments on time.

Journals:

Students are required to keep notes on their observations and turn them in twice per semester. For every observation, note the date, time, place, and what type of hearing you observed. Then, you may write in general about any observations you have. You may choose to note your reactions and analysis of what you observe, and you may also integrate the classroom discussion and readings. During your observations, you may choose to focus on the questions below.

1. Courtroom. Look around you. Notice the courtroom. How is it laid out? Who sits where and why? What equipment is available? How is the furniture arranged? Is there any art or decoration displayed?
2. The people.
 - a. Judge - age, race, gender. What is his or her demeanor? How was the courtroom managed? Did the judge seem to pay attention to ensuring due process? In what way? What was your assessment of the skills that the judge brought to the bench? Does the judge have a formal or informal style?
 - b. Lawyers - age, race, gender. What was the demeanor of the lawyers involved? Were the lawyers concerned with due process? In what way? What was your assessment of the lawyers' skills? Could you relate to any of the lawyers, or the judge, and did you think your style might be similar?
 - c. Litigants - age, race, gender, apparent social class, dress, demeanor, credibility, other observations?
3. Type of proceeding. What type of proceeding was it? Could you learn anything about the problem that brought the parties to court? Could you understand what stage of the case they were in?
4. Evidence. Was any evidence introduced? Any thoughts on the evidence?
5. Legal issues. What was at issue, if you could tell? How were the issues presented? Was there any resolution of the issues? Did the lawyers raise any objections? Did the court make any rulings?
6. Justice. Was the proceeding fair and just? Did it meet your expectations? Were you surprised by anything?
7. Any legally irrelevant observations?

ⁱ This course is designed in part by reference to similar courses by Valerie P. Hans, University of Delaware; Vernellia R. Randall, The University of Dayton School of Law; and Patricia Henry, Susan Knipps, and Valerie Raine, Fordham School of Law.