

Windsor Law
Social Justice Fellowship Program

End of Placement Assignment: Critical Reflection Paper

Assignment Rationale

At this stage you are in the midst of your Social Justice Fellowship (SJP), and we hope you are having an interesting and challenging time doing so! Your SJF is allowing you to learn about the law in practice. As you know, learning from experience can be quite different from learning from reading or in a classroom setting. Both forms of learning are important and can be complementary.

This assignment is intended to allow you focused time to reflect on your experience throughout the SJF Program. Its purpose is to assist you in articulating what you have learned from the SJF, and to intentionally focus on professional and personal identity formation in doing so. The assignment is also intended to strengthen connections between the strictly academic portions of the Windsor Law degree program and the hands-on, practice context you are experiencing in your placement. Reflection assignments should not require significant outside reading (although that can be useful); rather, you should focus on deeply reflecting on your experiences in your SJF, and connecting theory and instruction you have learned in law school with the practice experience you're getting. The assignment will be read by your Faculty Supervisor, and perhaps other members of the SJF Committee.

Paper Instructions

You are expected to write a 10-12, double-spaced critical reflection paper on your experiences in the Social Justice Fellowship Program, due **before 12 noon on Monday, September 17, 2018**, to both your advising professor and to the Student Services Office. Below are a series of questions to help guide your reflections and shape your paper. You do not need to answer every question or address every subject heading. You should feel free to add to the questions or topics as you wish, and to do some research if it helps you process aspects of your experiences. But rather than structuring your paper as a series of answers to the listed questions below, organize your paper into a single narrative, that is logically organized around themes. This is, after all, an academic paper, which requires organization and critical analysis of the themes you are exploring.

Students should write in the first person. Citations, where necessary, are to be in McGill Guide format. Rather than spending significant amounts of time *describing* an incident, students should focus on their responses, reactions, and reflections. A paper that is solely descriptive does not meet the goals of the exercise, because description alone does not offer reflection and analysis.

Guiding Questions:

- 1) Reflection on bias and learning
 - a. What did you hope to gain from the placement?
 - b. What beliefs, ideologies, or assumptions did you bring to the work of your SJF?
 - c. What were three of the most important lessons you learned over the placement?
 - d. What would you have liked to learn and didn't? How would you plan your next placement or experiential learning opportunity to supplement this experience?
 - e. What are the strengths you brought to the placement that served you well?
 - f. How did what you learn in your placement impact what you want to do in the future?

- 2) Reflection on work and supervision
 - a. What type of work did you do? Were you good at? What aspects could you have done better?
 - b. What mistakes did you make? How did you own up to mistakes? How did you plan to improve next time?
 - c. What went well with in your relationship with your placement supervisor? What could have gone better? What could you have done to improve your relationship with your placement supervisor? What could you do to be a good supervisor for others in the future?
 - d. What did you see your placement supervisor do that you admired and would like to emulate? What did you see your supervisor do that you would not like to integrate into your practice?

- 3) Reflection on access to justice and structural inequality
 - a. Thinking back on the Access to Justice course, what readings, topics or discussions were relevant in the work context? What became "real" about access to justice in your particular practice context?
 - b. More generally, how, and to what extent, did your class-based learning so far link or relate to what you have seen in practice?
 - c. From a policy perspective, did you notice any gaps in the law that became obvious during your experience (or the experiences of your clients)? What did you learn from clients and communities about critically analyzing the law that supplemented what you already knew or learned?
 - d. What were your clients' expectations of the law? How did they understand what the law was, should be, and/or the concept of justice? What were they seeking, and how did that compare with what you consider justice to mean?
 - e. Were there institutional structures that impacted clients' and communities' engagement with law in a positive or negative way (this could be courts, workplace policies, non-profit structures, etc.)? What large-scale or macro systems impacted clients' experiences? In your view, how could these be improved?
 - f. What did you learn about the role of the lawyer through your experience? Were you treated a certain way because of your training? What did you learn about the operation of professional power?

4) Reflection on law

- a. How did the law act as a tool, support, litmus test, or useful instrument for clients? How did the law, its institutional structures, act as a barrier?
- b. How did law as you learned in class differ from how you experienced it during your placement?
- c. Did you work with other non-lawyers professions who used the law? How did other professions understand law and perhaps use it in unique or interesting ways?

5) Reflections on ethics and morality

- a. What ethical challenges did you face throughout the term? Note that “ethical challenges” can be interpreted through the lens of lawyering ethics as well as personal morality.
- b. Were you asked to do something that you found personally, morally uncomfortable? Was there something that you found was in alignment with you personal morals?
- c. When did the Rules of Professional Conduct come in handy in making a decision? Where were they less than helpful? How do the Rules of Professional Conduct “work” in an access to justice context and how could they be strengthened?