

Assessment of Stone Soup Course Experience

This questionnaire is for faculty to describe and assess your experiences with “Stone Soup” Project assignments or activities. Your responses will be posted on the Indisputably blog and may be disseminated in other ways as well. Please describe specifics of your experience, but do not include information that could identify any student (except as noted below) or subject of a Stone Soup assignment or activity.

1. Faculty name: **Carolyn Wilkes Kaas**
2. School: **Quinnipiac University School of Law**
3. Course: **Externship Seminar (Mixed Placements; all types). The course title is “Examining the Legal Profession.” This is a mandatory one-credit course for all first-time externs. Placements can be at any of the following: non-profit poverty agency, government, private practice, in house corporate, judicial chambers, mediation entity (court annexed and not).**
4. Semester: **Fall 2017**
5. Number of students in the course: **18 [Typical range is 15-30].**
6. Briefly describe the Stone Soup assignment or activity (e.g., interview or focus group class). If you assigned students to conduct an interview, summarize the type of subjects and focus of the interview. If you conducted a focus group class, describe the speakers and issues discussed.

Stone Soup Assignment #1:

- **Reading on the Future of the Legal Profession.**
- **Interview externship supervisor about what important changes or trends that the supervisor sees happening in their practice setting, and their opinion about those changes.**
- **Draft reflection paper about the reading and the interview.**
- **Discuss in class.**

Stone Soup Assignment #2:

- **Readings on the “Public Citizen” role of lawyers (as defined in Preamble of Rules of Professional Conduct).**
- **Small Group assignment in class: students in groups, depending on type of placement, to brainstorm what various aspects of “Public Citizen” lawyer should and does means in their type of practice, and how those lawyers can fulfill the obligations.**
- **Next, interview externship supervisor on how they do, or do not, think they meet the obligations of a public citizen lawyer.**
- **As a result of all this, in Final Reflection paper, students asked to create a “professional development” plan of how they intend to meet**

“Public Citizen” obligations in an ongoing manner throughout career.

7. Was the assignment required, one of several options, or for extra credit?

Required

8. If students were to write a paper, how long was the paper supposed to be (in double-spaced pages)?

Assignment #1: 2-3 pages

Assignment #2: Part of a 5-6 page final paper

9. When was the assignment due (or when did you conduct a Stone Soup activity)?

Assignment #1 was due Class 5 of the semester [Oct 16], discussion in class.

Assignment #2 discussion was Class 6 [Oct 30] and part of the final Reflection Paper, due December 19, 2017.

10. What percentage of the grade was allocated to the assignment?

This is mandatory one-credit seminar that meets alternate weeks.

Assignment #1: One of six on-going Reflection papers. Each one is 5% of total grade. Discussion is part of Class Participation, which is 20% of grade.

Assignment #2: Discussion is part of Class Participation, which is 20% of grade. Final Reflection paper is 25% of grade.

11. Did you discuss in class the results of students’ work? If so, what did you and the students learn from this discussion? Was this a good use of class time?

Assignment #1: Each student presented the results of their interview of externship supervisor in class. Along with insights from the reading assignment, there was a discussion of trends and the future of the legal profession in various types of practice settings. We learned how different the perspectives are. Even those supervisors who discussed the impact of technology varied, with some quite positive and others focused on the negative.

The consensus was that the practice of criminal law had changed less than civil practice, except for the evolution of scientific/forensic evidence. We

also learned that none of the experienced supervisors – who are in the thick of practice -- have done much reading or study of the global trends of change (as presented in the assigned reading) and many were wary of changes. I helped the students focus on how much their generation is going to have to keep track of these trends and embrace the future—harness technology, develop new business models, etc.

Great use of class time. If I had left it as only a writing assignment, they would have had no idea of what the other supervisors thought, nor any way to evaluate and compare the quality of their supervisors' responses. We left class with a much more comprehensive understanding of the breadth of practice, the scope of change, and the variety of opinions.

Assignment #2: We did not and will not discuss the interview of supervisor on “Public Citizen” in class. But the discussion before the interview did get students focused on their type of setting, and prepared them better for this interview. Still grading their final papers.

12. What did students learn that they wouldn't have learned without the Stone Soup assignment or activity?

If all I had done was give the students a reading to do and a class discussion, we would have missed an important dimension to our discussion: how the practicing bar, and judges and mediators, view these topics. Moreover, the students would have not known as much about practice in settings different than their own placement.

Interestingly, although students also make presentations to each other about their experiences at their placements in the last two classes, those presentations are “open topic” [i.e., no direction from me] and tend to be less academic and more practical descriptions of the day-to-day life of a lawyer in that setting. This is fine with me, as that is also an explicit learning outcome for this seminar, but I like the fact that students now present to, and hear from, each other on both practical and academic topics.

I also very much like adding the directed interviews to the externship experience, which requires students to talk to their supervisors about something other than their particular assignments. I had started doing the “future of the legal profession” interview assignment a few years ago, before Stone Soup started, and although some of the particular answers by supervisors have been superficial, some have been terrific and the whole experience has been successful. This experience is what drew me to participate in Stone Soup.

I had planned originally to have students do a second interview on “negotiation” as part of the Stone Soup project, but switched it to the “Public Citizen” topic when the project was broadened. Partly this was that I was already at the limit of time for a one-credit seminar. Also, I had been discussing the “Public Citizen” duty in prior semesters, but was dissatisfied with the quality of the discussion, and decided that interviewing supervisors might improve the depth of the discussion.

So far, it has improved the time and energy students put into the topic and thus, has improved their understanding. I have not yet analyzed whether that is more from their energy or from the added dimension of the responses by the supervisors. As I indicate below in #14, I will make a change for next semester so that they also learn from the other students’ supervisors as well.

13. What worked well with the assignment or activity?

By assigning the students some readings and also an interview, they were better informed interviewers. By writing a reflection paper before class, they had a chance to integrate the readings and the interview before talking about it in class. The in-class reports were lengthy but indispensable, in order to broaden each students’ understanding of practice, beyond their own placement. (Again, this is an express learning outcome of mine.)

Throughout the semester, students have lots of contact with their externship supervisors (they had better!) and many discussions. However, those tend to be about the particular assignments and in order to give feedback on student’s development. These two assignments require the students and the supervisors to engage on a broader level about the profession more generally, and hopefully, add a dimension to their relationships.

By requiring each student to bring this “data” back to class, all the students learn about the perspectives of experienced lawyers (and judges and mediators) in many types of practice settings. Thus, in addition to what they learn from the particular legal work they are doing in their own externship, they are also “studying” the legal profession across practice settings very different from the one in which they are placed. This is an explicit learning outcome of the seminar portion of our externship course.

14. What would you do differently if you do it again?

I would use the same format for #2 as I did for #1: have students do some reading first and then interview their supervisors; then write a reflection paper on the topic integrating the reading and the interview; and finally, participate in a class discussion where each student reports on the

interview. I am the one getting to read all the insights about Assignment #2 in their final papers, but they are not getting the full benefit of learning from each other, and from each other's supervisors.

I am not sure if I should give supervisors any sort of heads up about these assignments. Right now, it is solely up to the student to approach the supervisor, alert them to this assignment, and conduct the interview. Supervisors who have had my students in other semesters do expect the interview assignment on "the future" by now, of course.

The "Public Citizen" assignment was new. Sadly, very few of my supervisors seem to have thought much about this aspect of the Professional Rules. To catch them unprepared has reduced the thoughtfulness of the results, so far, and may have the unintended consequence of giving the students the message that this "duty" is just something to talk about in the loftiness of law school, and not really that relevant in the day to day press of the business of practice.

I have collected no data from the supervisors on their evaluation of this assignment. I must add this to my "to-do" list for next semester.

15. What would you advise other faculty considering using a Stone Soup assignment or activity?

I think the externship setting is a perfect place for this type of assignment, and I urge other externship and in-house clinical professors to consider it. I had hesitated because I thought my students already had such frequent and deep relationships with their supervisors, but my experience has been that the quality and breadth of the data that the students collect is improved. (As noted, I have not yet asked supervisors how they feel about it.)

As for using this modality in a non-clinical [simulation or doctrinal] class: I can only imagine how much it would add to the understanding of how theory is applied in practice. However, I am not sure how I would go about suggesting students find practitioners to interview if they were not in an externship setting. Those with jobs have easy access, but I would feel obligated to help students to get access to good lawyers to interview—perhaps through bar association contacts. For example, I serve on our state bar "Professionalism" committee. Those lawyers are always asking what they can do to "help improve development of professionalism" for law students. I suspect that the committee members would eagerly agree to be interviewed by law students and would be excellent "exemplars" of the best of our profession.