FALL 2025
LACIS 440 (004): Applying Spanish Language Skills at an Immigration Law Clinic

Professor Sara L. McKinnon
Class time: Select Fridays & Tuesdays & Volunteer Times
Office Location: Vilas 6035
Office Hours: Tuesdays when we have class, 1:00-2:00 PM, in Ingraham 209
Contact Information: smckinnon@wisc.edu, 480-861-0673 (phone, text, WhatsApp)

Important Locations:
Class Location: See Below in Required Class Times

Volunteer Location:
Community Immigration Law Center (CILC)
c/o Christ Presbyterian Church
944 East Gorham Street
Madison, WI 53703
https://www.cilcmadison.org/

In this community-engaged class, students will learn about the experiences of Latine asylum seekers in the US while working with the Community Immigration Law Center (CILC) in Madison, WI, doing interpretation and translation for Spanish-speaking clients.

Requirement: Comfort reading, writing, and speaking in Spanish and English.

Class Time: Select Fridays from 11:00-12:30PM & Tuesdays from 2:00-3:30PM. Fridays will be spent volunteering in either or both morning and afternoon time slots to meet the required hours working with CILC.

Required Class Days (See below for topics discussed on these days)

- **Friday, September 5, from 11:00 AM-12:30 PM, Vilas Hall 6110 (Communication Arts Department Main Office, Ewbank Conference Room)**
- **Tuesday, September 9, from 2:00 PM-3:30 PM, Ingraham Hall 206**
- **Tuesday, September 30, from 2:00 PM-3:30 PM, Ingraham Hall 206**
- **Tuesday, October 14, from 2:00 PM-3:30 PM, Ingraham Hall 206**
- **Tuesday, November 11, from 2:00 PM-3:30 PM, Ingraham Hall 206**
- **Tuesday, December 2, from 2:00 PM-3:30 PM, Ingraham Hall 206**

Class Learning Objectives:

- Understand the US immigration and asylum systems from the ground level
- Generate language justice by assisting immigrants and asylum seekers in successfully making their claims for humanitarian immigration protections.
- Learn best practices in interpretation and translation when working with immigrant communities.

- Reflect on what it means to be an immigrant seeking humanitarian immigration relief in the United States today.
- Gain insight into the work of pro bono immigration justice organizations by working alongside them.
- Practice writing country condition reports that may serve as evidence to support asylum claims.

What you'll need and do for the Class

1. Required readings and materials can be accessed in Modules tab
2. Major assignments are described in the Assignments tab
3. You will need to sign up to volunteer for 8 Friday morning or afternoon sessions, which equals approximately 30 volunteer hours over the semester. The CILC volunteer coordinator needs to know at least two weeks in advance of the days you will be available, so please include your name in the Volunteer Sign Up where you can volunteer, and she will make sure that everyone gets at least 8 spots to volunteer. You must be present for any volunteer slots you sign up for within two weeks of the session date.

Assignments

1. Reflection Journal (200 points): You will maintain a reflection journal about your volunteer experiences. The journal is where you will reflect on what you are learning about the U.S. immigration and asylum systems through your volunteer work. It will also be a space for you to process and express any emotions that arise while working with clients. I ask that you make at least one entry for each volunteer experience you have and include a final reflection about your experience as a whole; you are welcome to provide more entries. I will expect a minimum of 9 substantive entries. This reflection journal and Natalia's notes about who is present to volunteer will count as your volunteer log to confirm that you've met your 30 volunteer hours.
2. Country Conditions Report (150 Points): You will research and write a 5-10 page report on country conditions specific to a particular country and type of persecution relevant to the U.S. refugee definition. This will serve as your final project for the course and is to be submitted at the end of the semester. You may draw inspiration for this project from one of the client cases you are working on, or you may choose to focus on country conditions tied to an issue that is important to you. Additionally, I have several ideas for necessary country conditions reports that I need for my work with other clients, and I'm happy to share those ideas so your work can be valuable in a practical case context.

Required Class Days—Schedule and Required Readings/Materials

Friday, September 5 from 11:00 AM-12:30 PM—Welcome, Introductions & Class Overview

- Roy, "How the U.S. Asylum Process Works"
- Mbaku, "Trauma Informed Lawyering"
- Recommended: Council on Foreign Relations, U.S. Postwar Immigration Policy
- Recommended: Roy, "Here Are the U.S. Immigration Terms to Know"
- Recommended: Albrink, "Trauma-Informed Legal Advocacy,"

- Recommended Source for more on Trauma-Informed Legal Advocacy: https://ncdvtmh.org/resources/legal/trauma-informed-legal-advocacy-tila-project/

Tuesday, September 9 from 2:00 PM-3:30 PM—Orientation with Natalia Lucek of CILC

- Watch: CILC Friday Volunteer Training (On Canvas)
- Watch: Pro Se Clinic Volunteer Training (On Canvas)
- Skim through Materials in Canvas Module: Required Materials for Volunteers (On Canvas)

Tuesday, September 30, from 2:00 PM-3:30 PM—Basics to Asylum and Legal Advocacy

- Roy & Cheatham, "Central America's Turbulent Northern Triangle"
- Ripley, "Crisis Prompts Record Emigration from Nicaragua, Surpassing Cold War Era"
- Burnett, "Why People Are Fleeing Honduras for The U.S.: 'All That's Left Here Is Misery'"
- Isacson & Meyer, "Halfway to the U.S.: A Report from Honduras on Migration"

Tuesday, October 14, from 2:00 PM-3:30 PM

- Muñoz-Pogossian & Winkler, "The Persistence of the Venezuelan Migrant and Refugee Crisis"
- Amaral, "The migratory implications of Ecuador's crisis"
- Fernández, "Violence Transforms Ecuador's Migration Landscape"

Tuesday, November 11, from 2:00 PM-3:30 PM

- McKinnon, "Citizenship and the Performance of Credibility" (On canvas)
- Shuman & Bohmer, "Representing Trauma" (On canvas)
- Haas, Introduction & Chapter 7: Epistemic Violence (On canvas)

Tuesday, December 2, from 2:00 PM-3:30 PM

Wrap up reflections

December 15, 2025

Due: The reflection journal and country conditions report, submitted on Canvas.