



NEW COURSE ADDRESSES WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS THROUGH WRITING

This Fall, LPS students have a unique opportunity to take LPS 135 “Community Writing.” This course is a collaboration between the Writing Program and the Drake Legal Clinic. The focus is on wrongful convictions.

It is being taught by English Professor, Carol Spaulding-Kruse, attorney Elaina Steenson, and director of the Wrongful Convictions Unit, Erica Nichols-Cook. They kindly shared some background on their collaboration and what students can expect in the fall.

Tell us more about the course. How did it come about?

ES: My sister was involved with the Drake Community Press when she was in undergrad, and she loved her experience. I know Carol has a heart for working with the community and I reached out to see if there was a way to collaborate, and this course was the result!

CSK: I love providing students with real-world opportunities to use their writing skills, not just in a professional setting like an internship but also in ways that benefit their community and their own development as writers. Community Writing has partnered with several non-profit organizations in the Drake area, but legal justice is a new area for an educational partnership.

ENC: I really enjoyed teaching Wrongful Convictions Law & Policy with LPS in the past and Elaina had this amazing idea to connect with the Drake community and tell the stories of our clients.

What can students expect to learn in the course?

ES: Everyone can be wrongfully convicted, and everyone is impacted by the criminal legal system. Students will be able to learn about individuals who have been wrongfully convicted in Iowa and how we all can help prevent these injustices from occurring.

CSK: In addition to learning about the subject matter, itself, students will develop writing skills selected from a range of options including gathering oral narratives that can be written into features and profiles; story mapping (an online platform); podcasting, advocacy writing, blogging, and more.

ENC: That Iowa incarcerates amazing people and there are stories behind all criminal convictions that go beyond the news.

As the instructors, what are you most excited about?

ES: I’m excited to work with students and learn from their experiences, perspectives, and creativity.

CSK: I get excited when students discover purposes for writing that go beyond just churning out a paper for a class.

ENC: Learning from students, what about a client or their conviction interests them and new ways of telling a client’s story.



What resources would you recommend for students wanting to learn more about wrongful convictions?

ES: The *Drake Law Library* has a lib guide with tons of resources on wrongful convictions, from TV shows and movies to podcasts and books!

- <https://libguides.law.drake.edu/c.php?g=1232361&p=9030694>

CSK: Honestly, I want to read the memoir about the wrongful conviction of Amanda Knox, who was exonerated in 2015 after many years. It’s a fascinating story.

ENC: A great free resource is the *National Registry of Exonerations*. In their database, you can search up a certain exoneree you have seen on the news, in a documentary or heard about on a podcast, or read about exonerations from certain types of crimes or places.

- www.law.umich.edu/special/exoneration/Pages/about.aspx

OPPORTUNITIES OF INTEREST FOR LPS STUDENTS

LPS Student Advisory Board is currently recruiting new Co-Writers for the LPS Newsletter!

LPS SAB is looking for someone to oversee production of the LPS Press. The person in this role will also serve on the board. All LPS majors are welcome and encouraged to apply!

- For more information, contact Alisha Lonon (Alisha.Lonon@drake.edu) or Professor Will Garriott (William.Garriott@drake.edu)