

2009 CHICAGO-KENT LAW REVIEW STAFF WRITING PROGRAM

On behalf of the entire Executive Board, congratulations on becoming a new member of the Chicago-Kent Law Review! One of the numerous benefits of being a Law Review member is the opportunity to take part in the Staff Writing Program. Through the Program, you will have the opportunity to publish your first scholarly legal work before you finish your time at Chicago-Kent. Over the past few years, the Law Review has undertaken an initiative to increase the number of student notes/comments that we publish, and we hope to set a record this year by publishing more than ever. This handout will describe some of the basics of the Program.

Executive Notes & Comments Editor:

The Executive Notes & Comments Editor (“ENCE”) is in charge of the Staff Writing Program. This year’s ENCE is Brian Kaunelis. Brian will be holding a weekly office hour (time to be announced) to discuss your notes/comments. He will always be available via e-mail and will also be available to schedule one-on-one meetings. Over the course of the semester, papers will periodically need to be submitted to Brian for edits and status checks (see the Track One and Track Two schedules).

Notes & Comments Editors:

Each new member will also be paired with one of sixteen Notes & Comments Editors (“NCEs”). These editors will be your day-to-day contacts for any questions or comments you might have. In addition, you will need to periodically meet with your NCE to discuss your paper. Once you have selected a topic, we will make efforts to pair you with a Notes & Comments editor who has an expertise or interest in your topic. If you will be seeking publication, you will need to get permission from your NCE before submitting your paper.

Faculty Advisors:

Each new member will be responsible for selecting a faculty advisor for his/her note/comment. Students tend to find faculty members whose specialties fall within the topics about which they are writing. If you will be seeking publication, you will need to get permission from your faculty advisor before submitting your paper.

Research Librarians:

Each new member will be paired with a research librarian. You will be responsible for scheduling a meeting with your research librarian in the near future. In the past, the research librarians have proven to be an invaluable resource in the note/comment writing process.

Online Resources:

As described in the other handouts, you will need to meet various benchmarks throughout the semester. Please refer to the website for examples of what various students’ papers have looked like at various stages of the writing process (e.g., a topic proposal, a research plan, and a preliminary draft).

CHOOSING A TOPIC:

As you begin the writing process, choosing a topic is a daunting but important task. Remember, the topic you select is going to become a big part of your life for the next year. Here are some useful tips:

What are your interests?

When you begin thinking about what you would like to write about, ask yourself what your interests are—not necessarily even your legal interests, but your interests in general. Are you interested in sports? International relations? Music? Politics? The financial markets? Gender issues? There are plenty of legal issues that deal with all of these topics. Or maybe you are interested in a specific area of law that you studied last year or intend to study in the future. The point is that you should put a good deal of thought into your topic. If you have a genuine interest in your topic, you will likely enjoy the Staff Writing Program considerably more, and it will show in your work.

Still stumped?

- Schedule an appointment with a professor you had last year or who may share some of your interests. The odds are that the professor will have some good input on hot topics or emerging legal issues.
- Go online. Legal blogs discuss controversial or interesting legal issues that make great topics. For example, <http://splitcircuits.blogspot.com/> is a blog specifically devoted to circuit splits, which are always popular for notes/comments (Circuits splits are also listed in the BNA's United States Law Week, on reserve in the Chicago-Kent Library). Another legal blog to generate ideas is the SCOTUS blog, <http://www.scotusblog.com/wp/>.
- Talk to upperclassmen members of Law Review, or schedule an appointment with your NCE. You have a large support system that is ready to help.

THE PUBLICATION PROCESS:

Chicago-Kent Law Review has no set number of student notes/comments that it will publish. We hope to publish as many student notes/comments as possible. The first step in the publication process is to meet all deadlines. Once your final draft is complete, you must obtain approval from your NCE and faculty advisor before submitting your note/comment. After obtaining approval, the twelve-member Law Review Executive Board will review all papers and will vote on whether or not to publish that paper. The Board will meet at the end of the first semester for notes/comments completed pursuant to Track One. The Board will meet in February and March to consider notes/comments completed pursuant to Track Two, as well as Track One papers which have been revised and resubmitted.

BATTLING WRITER'S BLOCK:

At some point this year, you will want to throw up your arms and give up on your note/comment. Try not to get frustrated. In effect, you are becoming a leading expert on a given area of law, and that takes time, effort, frustration, and devotion. Utilize the support system around you—your fellow new members, NCEs, ENCE, faculty advisors, and research librarians all want to help.

SELECTING TRACK ONE OR TRACK TWO?:

Students selecting "Track One" will complete their note or comment several months earlier than those electing "Track Two." This track is advantageous for those students who are committed to pursuing publication. Notes and comments completed by the Track One Deadline will be considered for publication at the end of the first semester or beginning of the second semester. Those which are not selected at this time will be returned to the author for revision and may be resubmitted at the deadline for Track Two notes and comments. Those who follow this procedure will have the advantage of having incorporated the critique of the Editorial Board into their finished product. In the past, such papers have had a high rate of publication. However, it is crucial to stress that every note or comment will be considered on its merits alone, and following the Track One timeline by no means guarantees publication.