

# John W. Adams Summer Scholars Program In Socio-legal Studies at Kenyon College



*“The John Adams Summer Legal Scholars come to a new appreciation for ‘sleuthing.’ Research and scholarship in socio-legal studies come about as a consequence of systematic, multi-method investigation. The type of ‘detective work’ required to become a Summer Legal Scholar stems from the ability to think both creatively as well as comprehensively about how ‘law’ is manifested and operates in a given setting. Just as there is no single conceptualization of ‘law,’ there is no one way to come to ‘know’ law and its place in society. Law is many things to different people in, and depending upon, a variety of social contexts. It is clear that law is more than the sum of its parts, usually impacting society far beyond the parameters of its official functions. The reach and meaning of law is discernible and observable in ways that transcend the limits of textual analysis. In other words, socio-legal scholars look beyond the codes and case decisions to the institutions and behaviors that are promoted or constrained, and they identify the societal values that are reflected in the ‘stuff’ of law. Summer Legal Scholars come to understand and appreciate law through hands-on investigation, whether their concentrated summer of sleuthing is the consequence of a self-designed research project, serving as a research assistant to a faculty mentor who is examining a socio-legal issue, or undertaking an internship with a nonprofit agency or organization.”*

– Professor Ric Sheffield, Director

**The John W. Adams Summer Scholars Program in Socio-legal Studies** provides opportunities for Kenyon students to explore the place and operation of law in society while working in close collaboration with faculty members or, in some instances, through internships with a nonprofit. Students, in collaboration with or under the direction of faculty mentors, spend the better part of the summer pursuing a comprehensive investigation of a socio-legal question, issue, problem, or topic. Such investigations range from examining the frequency and effect of environmental regulation enforcement to identifying and constructing the primary factors leading to the granting of presidential clemency and pardons. Summer Legal Scholars investigate the impact of law at the micro level as well as tackle the larger questions such as those that examine the capacity of legal institutions to do justice. Questions that pertain to the “things of law,” the “workings of law,” and the “meanings of law” are all fair game for summer legal sleuths.

## **TRACK ONE – SUMMER RESEARCH PROJECT**

The applicant identifies a specific topic or area of inquiry that involves a “legal” question or issue. She or he must obtain a commitment from a prospective faculty mentor to supervise the summer research if the applicant’s proposal is accepted for the fellowship. The term “legal” is to be viewed in the broadest sense; however, the important requirement is that the research is intended to provide the student with a fuller understanding of the role or place of law in the social arena in which the question or issue exists. Since many socio-legal scholars believe that law is ubiquitous, it should not be difficult to see the presence or influence of law in most, if not all, social contexts and locations. Unlike common research pursuits in law school or the legal profession, the goal of socio-legal research is not to determine what the existing law is or predict the outcome of controversies brought before legal tribunals. The focus of a Summer Legal Scholar is often trying to discern what law “looks like,” “how it operates,” and “what meaning is attached to what it does.” These are foundational questions regardless of discipline and field and can lend themselves to inquiry through the conventional methodologies of a wide array of disciplines. Thus, Summer Legal Scholars may and do come from a variety of departmental majors and academic backgrounds. Similarly, faculty mentors need not be socio-legal scholars, nor is it required that they have taught any law-related course. Mentors need only be committed to guiding students through original research projects and helping those students see the intersections of law and the disciplines from which they come.

### ***Requirements:***

***Comprehensive research paper & Public presentation***

## **TRACK TWO – RESEARCH ASSISTANT**

A faculty member working on a research project that involves some socio-legal question or issue invites a student to assist in the investigation. What constitutes “socio-legal” will be construed broadly. The students will be assigned specific tasks such as undertaking a comprehensive literature search, creating an annotated bibliography, and/or doing data collection and processing. A primary objective of the program through this track is to give the student the experience of being a contributing member of an academic research team or partnership while gaining a fuller understanding and appreciation of the role of law in society. Applicants may come from any major in the College; faculty may represent any discipline or field wherein questions or issues of law can be pursued.

***Requirements: Final product to be determined by mentor  
Public presentation***

## **TRACK THREE - INTERNSHIP**

A student will propose a summer internship placement with a nonprofit “legal” office, social services agency, or similar organization where the student’s primary work will involve researching policy questions or evaluating the effect or impact of the host agencies upon its constituencies. Appropriate institutions might include governmental regulatory agencies, legal services offices, social services organizations, and educational institutions. The placement must be structured so that the student’s responsibilities give her or him exposure to the role that law plays within the organization. Proposed internships will not be funded if the student works in any capacity that serves to promote a candidate for elective office. Applicants must obtain a commitment from a prospective faculty mentor to co-supervise the summer research along with an agency representative if the applicant’s proposal is accepted for the fellowship.

***Requirements:  
Ordinarily comprehensive research paper & Public presentation***

### **Previous Summer Legal Scholars and their projects include:**

- Eliza Fairbrother ‘16 ~ “Border Granny Wants You!: Grandmothers Policing Nation at the U.S.-Mexico Border”
- Noah Gurzenski ‘17 ~ “Abortion in the Courts: How Collective Judgment Facilitates the Interaction of the Judicial Branch and the Citizenry”
- Grace Hitzeman ‘15 ~ “Law and Narrative”
- Conrad Jacober ‘15 ~ “Financialization and Crisis: On the Reproduction of Capital”
- Javier Leung ‘15 ~ “Precaution in Action or Precautionary Inaction? Evaluating the Lisbon Treaty’s adoption of the Precautionary Principle in European Environmental law”
- Qi Amelia Li ‘15 ~ “Effects of Children’s Incarceration on Parents on the Outside: A Case Study of an Online Forum”
- Kelly Menzel ‘15 ~ “Narrating Law and History and Cultural Identity: An analysis of Contemporary Dominican-American Literature”
- Kelsey Randhawa ‘15 ~ “Framing the Immigration Debate in the United States”
- Nolan Reisen ‘15 ~ “American Public Morality in Context of the Gay Marriage Debate”
- Whitney Simon ‘15 ~ “Gender-Based Violence and the European Union: A Public Health Concern”



**CLOSE COLLABORATION W/FACULTY MENTORS**



**INDEPENDENT RESEARCH**



**SUMMER HOUSING ON CAMPUS**



**SUMMER STIPEND**

**If you have any questions, please contact:**

**Ric Sheffield**, Director — [sheffier@kenyon.edu](mailto:sheffier@kenyon.edu)

or

**Andrea Lechleitner**, Admin — [lechleitnera@kenyon.edu](mailto:lechleitnera@kenyon.edu)