



Columbia Law School
MOOT COURT PROGRAMS

The Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP
Moot Court Program

The Winston & Strawn International Moot Court Program

Moot Court Programs 2021-2022

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Dear Class of 2024:

Welcome to the world of moot court! In the spring, you will take the second half of Legal Practice Workshop (“LPW II”). As part of LPW II, you will be required to participate in an approved moot court program. This handbook is designed to teach you about the Law School’s ten 1L moot court offerings.

Most of you will satisfy the moot court requirement through participation in the 1L Foundation Moot Court. Through that program, you will receive a moot court problem created through the Law School in January. Working in pairs, you will write several drafts of an appellate brief and then orally argue your position before a panel of alumni and student judges.

Some of you will choose to satisfy your moot court requirement through participation in one of the following “specialized” moot court programs:

American Intellectual Property Law Association (AIPLA) Moot Court
Environmental Law Moot Court
European Law Moot Court (EU)
Frederick Douglass Moot Court
Jessup International Moot Court
LaLSA Moot Court
Native American Law Students Association (NALSA) Moot Court
Vienna International Arbitration Moot Court (Vis)
Williams Institute Moot Court

These programs allow you to focus your advocacy on a substantive area of law that interests you. Enrollment for each of the listed programs is limited, and interested students must complete an application process in the fall. These programs also have their own timetables, which are set by the sponsoring organizations that create the problems. For some of the programs, you will begin writing your brief in the fall semester. However, regardless of the timetable or other requirements of the particular program in which you participate, you will need to attend and complete satisfactorily the corresponding Legal Practice Workshop section, which runs through the entire spring semester. As part of this course, you will revise your brief under the supervision of a student editor and instructor.

I hope that you have an engaging and rewarding moot court experience.

Best wishes,

Sophia Bernhardt
Director, Legal Writing and Moot Court Programs

Brandon R. Weber, Student Director, Specialized Moot Court Programs

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1L Foundation Moot Court

Beginning in January, each 1L participant researches and writes an appellate brief under the close supervision of an upper-class student editor and an instructor. The problems are designed by the editors and in the past have involved a range of legal issues, including First Amendment violations, copyright and trademark infringement, defamation, employment discrimination, civil rights violations, and criminal law.

Editors and instructors work with Foundation participants through all stages of the research, drafting, and revision process. Later in the semester, students will present oral arguments on their briefs before panels of alumni attorneys and student judges. The 1L Foundation Moot Court is an excellent opportunity for 1L students to develop and apply the research and writing skills acquired in the fall semester, while offering students practical training in brief writing and appellate advocacy. The structure and pace of the course allow students to create polished writing samples while reflecting on the purpose of various components of an appellate brief.

Satisfactory completion of the 1L Foundation Moot Court is mandatory for those not participating in an equivalent specialized moot court program.

Eligibility

All 1L students are eligible to participate in the spring, and no application is required. Foundation Moot Court is mandatory for those not participating in an equivalent specialized moot court program.

Requirements

Satisfactory completion of an appellate brief and oral argument

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The Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison Moot Court Program

American Intellectual Property Law Association (AIPLA) Moot Court

The Giles Sutherland Rich Moot Court Competition, sponsored by the American Intellectual Property Law Association, is a moot court devoted to issues of intellectual property law. Recent years' problems have focused on patent law issues, such as the validity of a patent for a mind-reading device. Other areas of IP law, such as copyright and trademark, are also sometimes involved.

Why AIPLA?

Intellectual property is a growing practice within the legal profession that touches upon multiple industries, including science, technology, healthcare, media, entertainment, sports, and finance, among others. Many law firms report a growing need for intellectual property departments, as both cases and deals more frequently feature an intellectual property component. By participating in the AIPLA Moot Court, students will learn the basics of intellectual property law and the appellate procedures of the Federal Circuit.

Application

While the AIPLA Moot Court problem will address issues in intellectual property law, no formal background in science, technology, copyright, or other IP areas is necessary. Team selections will be made based on the completion of application materials and an enthusiasm for intellectual property and/or public speaking. Our internal moot court curriculum is designed so that team members will first receive exposure to intellectual property law and public speaking, at which point they will be prepared to address the AIPLA Moot Court problem.

We will select at least twelve students for the AIPLA moot court this fall. Interested students who cannot attend the information session should email cls.aipla@gmail.com for more information.

Competitions

Internal Competition: To determine which AIPLA students will attend the regional competition, we will review each student's legal writing and oral advocacy skills during the Internal Competition. In mid-October, students will submit their first LPW memo and present oral arguments based on a patent-related prompt. All AIPLA students must participate in the Internal Competition to be considered for the external team.

Regional Competition: The four students that perform the best in the internal competition will advance to the regional competition, where they will represent Columbia against teams from other schools. Regional competitors, in teams of two, write an appellant and an appellee brief over winter break. Each team will work closely with the editors and coaches, who will assist with research, the brief-writing process, and oral arguments. The regional competition will be held in Boston (or remotely) in March.

National Competition: The top two teams at the regional competition advance to the national competition in Washington, D.C. (or remotely) in April, where students argue before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit for the championship title and a prize of \$2,000.

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Environmental Law Moot Court

Why Environmental Law Moot Court?

The Environmental Law Moot Court is a great way to fulfill your 1L moot court requirement while gaining valuable advocacy experience through one-on-one training. Our competition team is one of the smallest of the moot court programs, and we make mentorship and team bonding a priority for all participants.

Build Skills

The Environmental Law Moot Court is an outstanding option for any student who wants to get more experience with appellate law. We welcome applicants of all backgrounds and interests. Environmental law is a mixed bag of many different legal subjects and disciplines including constitutional law, torts, administrative law, and property, to name just a few. We encourage students with past experience in environmental law or policy to apply, as well as those with a general interest in appellate law who want to master a challenging legal problem. By the end of the spring semester, participants will have written a full appellate brief and thoroughly prepared for a rigorous oral argument.

A Record of Excellence

Even though we are the only school that sends 1Ls to the national competition, Columbia consistently performs well at the competition. On the heels of Columbia's first ever national championship win in 2017, the 2018 team took home the award for best written brief out of a field of 60 teams from across the country. The 2019 competitors advanced to the quarterfinals and took home several individual placements for best oralist in their rounds. The 2020 team also won several best oralist awards and the 2021 team advanced to the quarterfinals with each competitor winning a best oralist award in one of their arguments.

Two Ways to Participate

Up to twelve 1L students may participate in the Environmental Law Moot Court. Three students will be selected for the *Competition Team* and will write their brief in the fall semester and attend the National Environmental Law Moot Court Competition at Pace Law School in February. The *Internal Team*, composed of twelve students, will write their briefs in the spring semester and will participate in an oral argument at Columbia in early April. The Internal Team is recommended for those students who are interested in environmental and appellate law and want to improve their legal-writing and oral-advocacy skills in a noncompetitive program. Students for the Competition Team are selected at the beginning of the fall semester, instead of later in the year as is the case with some other moot court programs.

Informational Meeting

A general interest meeting for Environmental Law Moot Court will be held on Friday, September 17 from 1:10 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Application Process

Students are strongly encouraged to apply to both the Competition Team and the Internal Team. If you are interested in both teams, please fill out applications for each team separately on LawNet. When you rank moot courts, you will be able to rank the Internal Team and the Competition Team separately. If you are only interested in one team, you need only apply to that team.

We will be reaching out to candidates to schedule an interview, which will consist of a short oral argument over Zoom. In the event that spots for the Internal Team are limited (as has been the case in recent years), preference will be given to those who express interest in both teams. Please note that the national competition is currently scheduled to run online.

Important Dates

September 17, 2021	Application opens and informational meeting
September 24, 2021	Application due
September 24–31, 2021	Oral argument tryouts (on Zoom)
October 5, 2021	Problem released
November 21, 2021	Written brief for Competition Team due
Mid-January 2022	Oral argument boot camp for Competition Team
February 23–26, 2022	National Environmental Law Moot Court Competition
Mid-March 2022	Written brief for Internal Team due
Early April 2022	Oral arguments for Internal Team

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Please reach out to us with any and all questions!

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The Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison Moot Court Program

Frederick Douglass Moot Court

Sponsored by the National Black Law Students Association

Become an Outstanding Advocate

The Frederick Douglass Moot Court team is looking for 1Ls from all backgrounds that are excited about developing their writing and advocacy skills. Topics generally concern constitutional law issues affecting marginalized communities, and in recent years have included: cruel and unusual punishment, due process, ineffective assistance of counsel, the Defense of Marriage Act, minority voting rights, classification of NCAA athletes as employees, affirmative action, torture, felon disenfranchisement statutes, racial profiling, and the process rights of capital defendants.

Become Part of a Winning Legacy

Frederick Douglass (Fred Doug) Moot Court is truly a team—and in fact the largest competitive team at Columbia Law School. Fred Doug 2Ls and 3Ls remain actively and enthusiastically involved, serving as coaches, editors, and judges. This support is integral to our team's long tradition of excellence in competition. Last year, our teams took first and second place at the regional competition, as well as the award for "Best Brief." We sent two teams to the national competition; both teams were national quarterfinalists. In prior years we have had similar success, including winning the national competition, sweeping regionals by winning all individual awards, as well as taking first, second, and third place.

Make the Most of Your Moot Court Experience

You can expect Frederick Douglass Moot Court to be a substantial time commitment, but you can also expect huge returns on your investment. You and your partner will work with 2L editors as you develop substantial brief writing skills. Editors will assist you, after your individual submission, as you make substantial edits to your briefs and arguments before the regional competition. The final product of your brief will be an excellent writing sample for employers. Once the second semester begins, your focus will turn to oral advocacy. You will be expected to master both sides of the problem—an incredibly rewarding challenge. Each team will complete numerous practice sessions in the weeks leading up to the regional competition. During those sessions, panels of student judges, all Fred Doug alumni, will challenge your arguments and provide extensive individual feedback. After all this prep work, you will feel prepared to field tough questions asked by attorneys, professors, and judges during the regional competition, and feel more confident in the classroom.

Join an Enriching Community

The Frederick Douglass Moot Court Team is made possible by the support of the Columbia Black Law Students Association. All of our team members become members

of BLSA; however, you do not need to be a member to apply. As part of Columbia BLSA, our team participates in general body meetings, community service, and committees. This is the heart of our team and our mission. All members are expected to attend general body meetings, and we also participate in a community service event with BLSA in the fall. Past members describe our moot court as the Fred Doug Family because we are part of a shared experience that goes beyond writing and the competition. By joining this moot court, you will become part of a community that extends far beyond law school and will support you throughout your time at Columbia.

Application Information

Information Session: September 17, 2021 from 1:10-2PM

Application Release: September 17, 2021 at 2PM

Application Closes: September 24, 2021 at 8PM

Oral tryouts: September 25–30, 2021

Match Run and Calls: October 1-3

Briefs Due: November 2021

Boot Camp: January 3–7, 2022 (early return from Winter Break)

Regional Competition: January 26-30, 2022 (As of now, in-person in Connecticut)

National Competition: March 2022

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The Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison Moot Court Program

Latinx Law Students Association (LaLSA) Moot Court

The LaLSA Moot Court program offers law students the opportunity to explore complex contemporary issues in asylum and refugee law while developing their brief writing and oral advocacy skills. Every year, thousands of refugees apply for asylum in the United States to escape persecution in their home countries. The LaLSA Moot Court focuses on the legal issues that affect those asylum claims. Students will compete in the Fifteenth Annual Asylum & Refugee Law National Moot Court Competition hosted by the UC Davis School of Law, where the team has had great success. In March 2021, our two teams placed first and second in the overall competition with each competitor earning an individual award for their outstanding oral advocacy or brief writing skills.

The Competition

We are looking for sixteen dedicated first-year law students of all backgrounds. Four student coaches and three student editors will assist selected students as they develop their legal writing and oral advocacy skills. During the fall semester, students will participate in weekly training workshops led by student editors and legal practitioners. Students can also attend organized social events to build relationships with team members, coaches, and editors. The competition problem will be released in mid-November, and students will write the first draft of their briefs during the winter break.

The final draft of the brief will be due in mid-January after a boot camp on legal writing and oral advocacy. During this time, students will practice their oral arguments to prepare for the internal competition, which will be judged by respected practitioners, professors, and judges in late January. In January 2021, Judge Edgardo Ramos (SDNY) and his former law clerk judged the final round of internals. Traditionally, the three top teams from internals represent Columbia Law School in the national competition in California, hosted by UC Davis during the first weekend in March. Whether the 2022 competition will be held virtually or in person is currently tentative.

The Application

Students will be chosen based on three criteria: (1) one short answer question about your interest in LaLSA Moot Court, (2) an oral presentation, and (3) a brief interview. The short answer should discuss why students wish to join the LaLSA Moot Court team and any experiences relevant to the selection process, including previous work or volunteer experiences. The oral presentation will require students to choose a side in an asylum issue and defend their position before the student coaches and editors. The issue will be thoroughly explained in the application materials, so no outside research will be necessary. The interview portion will immediately follow the oral presentation and will

consist of approximately three questions to help the coaches and editors better gauge an applicant's interests, experiences, and qualifications.

Important Dates

September 17	Application Released
September 21	LaLSA Moot Court Informational Session (12:00PM EDT; Room TBD)
September 23	Office Hours with Editors & Coaches (12:00–4:00PM EDT on Zoom; Meeting ID: 710 5653 4402; Password: mootcourt)
September 24	Application Due on LawNet
September 25–29	Tryouts (Oral Presentation & Interview)
Mid-November	Problem Released
Early January	Moot Camp
Early January	Brief Drafting Days
Late January	Internal Competition
Early March	UC Davis National Competition

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Native American Law Students Association (NALSA) Moot Court

The National Native American Law Students Association (NNALSA) has hosted a national moot court competition since 1993, offering students from all backgrounds a great opportunity to gain experience in the interdisciplinary and dynamic field of federal Indian law. Recent topics in the area of federal Indian law include the right to counsel in tribal courts, marijuana legalization, child custody under the Indian Child Welfare Act, casino gambling regulations, and the status of reservation boundaries.

After a few primer classes on basic federal Indian law and brief writing, participants spend part of the fall semester and winter break working with their partner to write a brief based on a problem published in November by the host school. Briefs are due in early January, after which teams practice with their coaches and editors for oral argument twice each week. The national competition will take place in late February or early March 2022 (dates TBD – in past years, the competition has been the weekend before spring break). Each team argues at least twice at the national competition—once on the side for which they wrote their brief and once on the opposite side. Judges consist of high-profile Native Law practitioners and academics, tribal justices, and state and federal judges. Sixteen teams are selected to advance beyond these preliminary rounds and are assigned different sides to argue for up to five additional elimination rounds. Scores at the competition combine teams’ brief scores with their scores for oral argument. In past years everyone who participated in the NALSA Moot Court program at Columbia was able to compete in the national competition, and we hope that will be the case this year. However, NNALSA has not yet announced how many teams will be allowed to compete from each school, so we might have two teams – one internal and one external. If that happens, the coaches and editors will work with competitors to decide which teams participate in each competition.

The University of Colorado Boulder will host the competition this year. The competition is scheduled to take place in person but may switch to an online or hybrid format if necessary. Columbia Law School teams are consistently among the top teams at the national competition. Last year, Columbia made up nearly half of the teams in the elite eight, and placed second, third, and fourth in the overall competition. Columbia students also won best spoken advocate and best written advocate awards.

- 1L students receive credit for the NALSA Moot Court to satisfy the Foundation Moot Court requirement. **Everyone** is eligible to participate and encouraged to apply. You do not have to be Native American, and many past participants have had little to no exposure to federal Indian law prior to joining the team (though

interest in the subject area and advocacy practice is a plus for applicants). 1Ls are welcome to reach out to any of this year's coaches and editors with any questions.

Important Dates

Friday, September 17	NALSA Moot Court Info Session
Friday, September 24	Application due at 8 p.m.
October 2021	Primer classes on Federal Indian Law and brief writing
November 2021	Problem published on the NNALSA website
December 2021	Sides assigned
January 2022	Briefs due
January–February 2022	Oral argument practices
February 2022	Participate in the national competition in Colorado

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The Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison Moot Court Program

The Columbia Gender and Sexuality Moot Court

The Gender and Sexuality Moot Court (formerly Williams) is the only national moot court competition dedicated to the areas of sexual orientation and gender identity law. It offers students the opportunity to analyze unique and challenging issues of constitutional law affecting the LGBTQ community. Previous legal topics have included a Title IX challenge to school policies affecting non-binary and transgender students, an affirmative action program based on sexual orientation in government contracting, the intersection of antidiscrimination law and religious liberty, and the rights of transgender people in prisons.

Program Structure

Twelve students will participate in the program at Columbia. Students of any background who have an interest in constitutional law, appellate advocacy, or issues of sexual orientation and gender identity are encouraged to apply.

Within the twelve students participating, we will select four students (two teams) to compete in the national competition. This selection will take place through a “mini moot” in the fall semester. During Legal Methods II, these external teams will participate in brief-writing and oral argument workshops with the editors and coaches. The external teams will submit briefs to the national competition in February and may, depending on travel restrictions, travel to sunny Los Angeles in late March to participate in rounds of oral argument before judges and legal professionals. If a team advances to the final round, they may return to UCLA in April to compete again.

In 2020 and 2021, the Williams Institute canceled the formal competition due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are currently awaiting updates for the 2022 competition; Williams’ ability to hold a competition will be determined by UCLA’s policy regarding outside visitors to campus. In 2021, Columbia created its own version of the Williams competition with participating schools from throughout New York state. If the formal 2022 Williams competition is canceled, we anticipate being able to offer an external competition similar to the one held in 2021.

Application Process

We will select students for the program based on a 250-word statement of interest, a short closed-universe writing prompt, and a 5-10 minute oral argument based on the closed-universe prompt. The statement of interest should discuss why students wish to join Williams, what they can contribute to the academic and/or social community of Williams, and any relevant experience, especially public speaking. After those twelve have been selected, we will hold an internal moot, or “mini-moot,” during the fall semester to determine which four will compose the external team.

One Important Note

Although the topics of this moot court focus on sexual orientation and gender identity, all identities are welcome!

Timeline

Information Session for All Programs: September 17th from 1:10-2pm

Application Released: September 17th

Smaller Information Session: September 21st, 7-8pm

Written Application Due: September 24th, 8pm

Oral Tryouts: September 26th, 12-3pm

Decisions Released: October 3rd

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European Law Moot Court

The European Law Moot Court deals with current issues in European law. This moot court is an exciting chance to tackle questions of current legal, social, and practical significance emerging from European integration and political changes in Europe.

Working on the moot court exposes team members to issues beyond what they would normally see in the 1L curriculum, giving team members a unique and valuable opportunity to learn about another legal system in depth. For instance, last year's problem touched on strands of EU law related to competition law, refugee law, the Covid-19 pandemic and vaccine creation, and the relationship between Member States and the EU. In years prior, the problem dealt with the public procurement, data-privacy regulations, Brexit, religious freedoms, corporate governance, and national security.

Schedule

There are three stages to the competition: (1) the submission of written pleadings; (2) the oral rounds in cities across Europe and around the world; and (3) the oral finals at the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. Because the written pleadings are due by the end of December, the teams begin working on their briefs at the end of September. This work is especially exciting for our 1L members, as it will expose them to brief-writing before the start of LPW II. The written briefs for ELMC are typically due before finals in the Fall, allowing the students to enjoy their winter break. Up to two teams of three to four students will draft written briefs on behalf of both applicants and defendants.

If a team's written pleading is selected by the regional moot court committee, the team will advance to one of the regional finals across Europe in February. In 2022, there is a possibility that these competitions will be hosted virtually. The Law School graciously funds the trip to Europe to compete in the regional finals. In previous years, regional rounds have been held in Athens, Helsinki, Prague, Paris, and Bremen. The judges include prominent scholars of European law as well as officials and judges from the European Court of Justice. Not only do team members gain invaluable experience in conducting oral arguments, but they are also able to meet with governmental officials, tour the host countries, and meet with other competitors from all over Europe and America. Columbia students have frequently won the best oral advocate award at regional finals.

The top teams from each regional final, as well as one additional individual team member, advance to the All-European Final held at the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg in March or April. Finalists are given the opportunity to moot in front of the

European Court of Justice, the highest court of the European Union. Columbia has previously won first place oral advocate at the All-European Final.

Application Process

We will be selecting team members for the 2021-22 competition (up to two teams of three to four members each). We encourage all interested 1Ls to apply. For native English speakers, knowledge of French at any level of competency is highly desirable, though not necessary. Native languages other than English are also an asset. Previous exposure to European law and/or previous experience with public speaking or debate will be considered assets, but are by no means required. We strongly encourage any interested students to apply!

Applications will be submitted through LawNet, and we request that candidates submit a resume, a brief statement of interest, and a 2-3 page writing sample of their clearest academic or professional writing. Top candidates will be notified and invited back for oral auditions. Two teams of three to four individuals will be selected.

Important Fall Dates

While subject to minor adjustment, we ask that you please keep the following tentative recruitment dates in mind:

September 17	Information session and applications open, 1:10-2:00 pm
September 24	Application materials due at 8:00 pm
September 27-29	Oral auditions
Mid December	Written submissions due

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The Winston & Strawn International Moot Court Program

Jessup International Law Moot Court

The Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition is the world's largest moot court, with participants from more than 600 law schools across 100+ nations. The competition simulates a dispute between two countries before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the judicial arm of the United Nations. Recent topics have included the use of force, international trade, international criminal law, state responsibility for environmental degradation and human rights violations, legality of nuclear weapons, undersea espionage, the threat or use of force, validity of international arbitral awards, mass surveillance, the right of self-determination, and international protections for traditional knowledge and cultural property.

Columbia Law School Jessup Team

The Columbia Law School Jessup team has been one of the most successful in the history of the Jessup competition, frequently winning national championships and advancing to become finalists or competition winners at the international level. Team members have also received numerous awards for their written submissions and individual accolades for being the best oralists at the preliminary and final rounds. This past year, the team won the Northeast Regional championship for the 11th time in 12 years and was crowned the U.S. Champions., but the international rounds were cancelled because of COVID-19. In 2018-19, Columbia Jessup was crowned U.S. Champions (placing ahead of roughly 110 U.S. schools competing over the course of the year) and successfully argued in the international rounds against the eventual Runner-Up in the World Championships. In 2016, the team became the first team since 1998 to win the top international honors for both of its written submissions. Team members have also received recognition from Columbia Law School for their work with the Jessup team. Since 2010, team members have been named Archie O. Dawson Prize (which recognizes proficiency in advocacy) winners five times, and David M. Berger Prize (which recognizes educational excellence in the field of international law) winners eight times.

This year, the Columbia Law School Jessup team seeks to recruit **three (3)** new members. Joining as a 1L requires a two-year commitment. Participation in Jessup fulfills the 1L moot court requirement and, as a 2L, may fulfill the minor writing requirement and earn course credit. **All** Columbia Jessup team members write a portion of the memorials and argue before the judges during competition rounds.

Application Process

1Ls applying for the Columbia Jessup team will be requested to submit a short-written brief arguing one side of a hypothetical contentious case before the ICJ. If selected to advance to the oral rounds, candidates will be requested to present a 10-minute argument for the opposite side of the same case. Candidates will occasionally be interrupted by

judges with questions relating to their arguments. Participation on the Columbia team is a substantial commitment, but offers a tremendously rewarding experience that gives students access to exceptional coaching in legal writing and oral advocacy, a forum for intellectually stimulating discussions on issues of international law, and an opportunity to meet law students and practitioners from around the world. Participants will also have access to a superb network of current and former participants, including alumni who have clerked at the ICJ, at the U.S. Supreme Court, in the 2nd Circuit, are DOJ Honors, work in the State Department, at Human Rights Watch, within the United Nations, and at top law firms.

Important Dates

While subject to adjustment, we ask that you please keep the following tentative recruitment dates in mind:

Friday, Sept. 17, 2021, 2020:	Release of application materials
Friday, Sept. 17, 2021 at 1:10 p.m.:	Big information session
Friday, Sept. 24, 2021 by 8:00 p.m.:	Candidates' applications & written briefs due
Saturday, Sept. 25--Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021:	Oral tryouts
Weekend of Oct. 1--3, 2021:	Announcement of new team members

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The Winston & Strawn International Moot Court Program

Vienna International Arbitration Moot Court (Vis)

What We Do

We represent Columbia Law School at the annual Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot, one of the most prestigious law school moot court competitions in the world and dubbed the “Olympics” of international commercial arbitration. The competition attracts over 300 law schools from around the world. The Vis Moot is based on a hypothetical private contractual dispute in international trade. It involves the submission of two written memos and an oral competition held in April in Vienna, Austria. Columbia Law School has a long tradition of sending a team to Vienna and is one of only four schools to have competed every year since the Moot’s founding. This year, because of COVID-19, the competition will be held virtually.

The preparation for written memos begins in the fall. 1L students will take the lead in researching and writing a Claimant brief (from October to November) and a Respondent brief (in January), with 2L coaches acting as resources and editors for their work. In the Spring, the team participates in a number of pre-moots held at law schools and law firms in New York. We do not know yet whether these events will be virtual or in-person. 1L team members will have the opportunity to prepare their own oral arguments and participate in several of the pre-moots, as well as assist the 2Ls in practicing their own arguments at weekly team meetings.

Columbia has consistently performed well at the Vis Moot, winning the inaugural moot in 1994 and the award for best Claimant Memorandum in 2006. Over the years, team members have consistently taken home speaking and brief awards from the Vienna competition.

How to Join

1L students at Columbia Law School may apply to join the Vis team at the beginning of each school year. There are no course or language prerequisites. The team will release applications in mid-September and will hold two to three days of tryouts soon afterwards. Participation in Vis satisfies the moot court component of the Legal Practice Workshop. The Vis team expects 1Ls to stay on as competitors and coaches during the 2L year.

Contact Information

For any questions or additional information, please email columbiavis.request@gmail.com or contact one of the coaches:

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