

2026 AALS Conference on Clinical Legal Education
Holding the Line: Clinical Education in Defense of Democracy
Friday, May 1 – Tuesday, May 5, 2026
Portland, Oregon

Request for Proposals for:

- Concurrent Sessions
- Lightning Sessions
- Poster Presentations
- Workshops

DEADLINE: Friday, October 3, 2025 @ 11:59 pm Eastern/ 8:59 pm Pacific
SUBMIT TO: [Submission Form](#)

I. Overview of Conference

The 2026 AALS Conference on Clinical Legal Education will take place from Friday, May 1 through Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at the Hilton Portland Downtown. The biennial Workshop for New Law School Teachers will be held on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning. The main conference will begin at 1 pm on Saturday with an Opening Plenary session and conclude on Tuesday afternoon.

The 2026 conference will feature structured sessions for the exchange of ideas as well as informal opportunities to connect with colleagues. In addition to the Opening Plenary Session, the conference program includes 60-minute concurrent sessions, 30-minute lightning sessions, poster presentations, and workshops. There will also be working group sessions, works-in-progress, and presentations from Bellows Scholars. Community gatherings will offer the chance to connect with colleagues without a formal program or agenda.

II. Conference Theme

The theme of the conference is ***Holding the Line: Clinical Education in Defense of Democracy***. The clinical community will convene at a time marked by intense polarization, retrenchment of hard-won rights, a departure from democratic norms, and unprecedented government intrusion into academic institutions and scholarly inquiry. These developments present serious and rapidly evolving challenges for our clients, students, and colleagues, as we continue instilling in the next generation of lawyers a commitment to using the law as a tool for equity and social change.

This conference honors the enduring legacy and promise of clinical legal education as a stronghold of civic engagement and justice. Attendees will discuss how to build thoughtful, skilled advocates who contribute to the preservation and advancement of democratic norms and institutions. This goal is closely tied to, but distinct from, the work of clinics in representing underserved clients and advancing social causes. Conference programming will highlight four subthemes:

- **Anchoring Democracy.** Law schools can function as stabilizing institutions that uphold democratic values and legal integrity. How do clinical educators work within their schools and communities to realize this potential? How do experiential opportunities cultivate leadership in defending democracy?
- **Pedagogies of Resistance.** Law has the power to entrench or resist authoritarianism. How does clinical pedagogy address this and equip students to reject authoritarianism and advance the cause of freedom?
- **Reclaiming Critical Inquiry.** Critical inquiry is a target of caricature and backlash. How does clinical education teach students to examine the law in the context of historic and contemporary power dynamics? What are the unique challenges to critical inquiry posed by the emergence of A.I.? How are clinicians maneuvering increased surveillance and its chilling effects on open discourse and the pursuit of justice?
- **Global Perspectives.** The ascendance of anti-pluralist politics is a worldwide phenomenon. How do global perspectives inform our work? How are clinicians incorporating comparative insights on democracy and academic freedom into their pedagogy?

III. Eligibility to Submit Proposals

Faculty members, including adjunct faculty and fellows, at AALS member and fee-paid schools are eligible to submit proposals. International faculty, visiting faculty (who do not have a permanent affiliation at a law school), graduate students, and non-law school faculty may serve as presenters, but the proposal must be submitted by an eligible faculty member.

Concurrent or lightning session presenters, poster presenters, and workshop leaders must pay the registration fee and are responsible for their own expenses for attendance at the Conference.

IV. Proposal Deadline

Proposals for a concurrent session, lighting session, poster presentation, or workshop must be submitted through the [Submission Form](#) by 11:59 pm Eastern/ 8:59 pm Pacific on Friday, October 3. The planning committee intends to notify participants by November 14 whether their proposals are accepted.

V. Proposal Requirements

Below are the proposal requirements for concurrent sessions, lightning sessions, poster presentations, and workshops. Please note that proposals will be kept confidential and the full conference program will only be accessible to registered participants.

A. Concurrent Sessions

The Committee seeks proposals for 60-minute concurrent sessions that develop the conference theme or address other topics of relevant interest to clinicians (e.g., pedagogy, ethics, cultural competence, and trauma-informed teaching and lawyering). By submitting

a concurrent session proposal, you agree to be scheduled in any of the concurrent session time slots or, if necessary, in a lightning session time slot.

Submission guidelines for Concurrent Sessions

To propose a concurrent session, use the [Submission Form](#), and select “Concurrent Session” from the dropdown menu. Your submission should consist of one document that contains the following:

1. **Description:** A one- to two-page description that includes: 1) the title, goals, and learning objectives for the session; 2) an outline for how the session will be structured, including any interactive elements; and 3) an articulated connection to the conference theme or explanation of the topic’s value and relevance for clinical teachers. In accordance with past attendee feedback, the Planning Committee encourages proposals that focus on specific teaching strategies and methods, include ideas that are replicable in different settings, and supply participants with concrete takeaways.
2. **Materials:** Describe any materials you intend to provide to participants at your session (including rubrics, surveys, syllabi, evaluation forms, bibliographies, and classroom exercises). If you wish, you may include materials with your proposal.
3. **Presenters:** Identify all individuals who will participate in planning and presenting the session, including their institutions, whether they come from another discipline or from outside the academy, whether they have presented at the AALS Clinical Conference in the past two years (and, if so, the title and nature of the session). Name one of them as the contact person for the group. The Planning Committee prefers proposals that include three or more presenters, and encourages proposals that combine presenters from multiple clinical perspectives (e.g., externship, in-house, and hybrid clinics or other clinical formats).

All law school presenters must register for the conference, if attending one session or the entire conference. Presenters who are not employed by a law school may attend the day of the session at no charge. They may pay the AALS member registration fee if they wish to attend more than one day. No funds are available for reimbursement of travel expenses for non-law/non-clinical faculty presenters on concurrent sessions.

B. Lightning Sessions

The Committee seeks proposals for 30-minute lightning sessions that develop the conference theme or address other issues of likely interest or relevance to clinicians. By submitting a lightning session proposal, you agree to be scheduled in any of the lightning session time slots.

Submission guidelines for Lightning Sessions

To propose a lightning session, use the [Submission Form](#), and select “Lightning Session” from the dropdown menu. Your submission should consist of one document that contains the following:

1. **Description:** A one- to two-page description that includes: 1) the title, goals, and learning objectives for the session; 2) an outline of how the session will be structured, including any interactive elements; and 3) an articulated connection to the conference theme or explanation of the topic’s value and relevance for clinical teachers.
2. **Materials:** Describe any materials you intend to provide to participants at your session (including rubrics, surveys, syllabi, evaluation forms, bibliographies, and classroom exercises). If you wish, you may include materials with your proposal.
3. **Presenters:** Identify all individuals who will participate in planning and presenting the session, including their institutions, whether they come from another discipline or from outside the academy, and whether they have presented at the AALS Clinical Conference in the past two years (and, if so, the title and nature of the session). Name one of them as the contact person for the group. The Planning Committee encourages presenters to collaborate with clinicians from other institutions.

We strongly encourage proposals that present one or two concrete takeaways for the audience. For example, a lightning session might describe a specific classroom exercise, instructional approach, self-care practice, or model of collaboration. Proposals should be realistic about the number of presenters who can meaningfully participate in a 30-minute session and how much can be covered during one session.

All law school presenters must register for the conference, if attending one session or the entire conference. Presenters who are not employed by a law school may attend the day of the session at no charge. They may pay the AALS member registration fee if they wish to attend more than one day. No funds are available for reimbursement of travel expenses for non-law/non-clinical faculty presenters on lightning sessions.

C. Poster Presentations

The reception on May 2 provides an opportunity for presenters to display posters and discuss their materials as conference participants circulate. The posters will remain on display in the registration area for the remainder of the conference. Poster presentations are an integral feature of professional conferences for many disciplines and allow for a broader audience than a single concurrent session. Posters are particularly useful for presenting material that is not well suited for the interactive format of a concurrent session.

Submission guidelines for Poster Presentations

To propose a poster presentation, use the [Submission Form](#), and select “Poster Presentation” from the dropdown menu. Your submission should consist of a single document that contains the following:

1. **Description:** A one-page description that includes: 1) your goals and learning objectives for the poster; 2) the content you expect the poster to include and how you expect to display it; and 3) the relationship of the poster to the conference theme or explanation of the topic's value and relevance for clinical teachers.

2. **Presenters:** Identify all individuals who will participate in preparing and presenting the poster, including their institutions and whether they come from another discipline or from outside the academy. Name one person as the contact person for the group.

All law school presenters must register for the conference, if attending one session or the entire conference. Presenters who are not employed by a law school may attend the day of the session at no charge. They may pay the AALS member registration fee if they wish to attend more than one day. No funds are available for reimbursement of travel expenses for non-law/non-clinical faculty presenters on poster presentations.

Many universities help in poster design and printing. You can find good tips on creating posters at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2018/05/11/how-to-design-an-award-winning-conference-poster/>

D. Workshops

Workshops provide an opportunity for groups of pre-registrants to explore a topic in-depth in one 3.25-hour session (including 15 minutes for a break or breaks).

Workshop attendance will be limited to a predetermined maximum number of pre-registrants.

Because workshops require more time and preparation than other sessions, the Planning Committee encourages workshops to be led by more than one person. Since participants will register for workshops in advance, we encourage workshop leaders to assign materials to participants and to convene them remotely before the conference begins.

Submission guidelines for Workshops

To propose a workshop, use the [Submission Form](#), and select "Workshop" from the dropdown menu. Your submission should consist of one document that contains the following:

1. **Description:** A one- to two-page description that includes: 1) the title, goals, and learning objectives for the workshop; 2) a detailed plan for how the workshop will be structured, including any interactive elements; and 3) a summary of why you believe your topic is particularly suited to the longer workshop format.

2. **Materials:** Describe any documents or materials you intend to provide to participants at your session (including rubrics, surveys, a syllabus, evaluation forms, bibliographies, and classroom exercises). If you wish, you may include materials with your proposal.

3. Presenters: Identify all individuals who will participate in planning and presenting the workshop, including their institutions, whether they come from another discipline or from outside the academy, and whether they have presented at the AALS Clinical Conference in the past two years (and, if so, the title and nature of the session). Name one of them as the contact person for the group. State the qualifications of the presenters to lead a workshop on the proposed topic. This may include experience in the subject of the workshop, past presentations on the topic, and related publications.

All law school presenters must register for the conference, if attending one session or the entire conference. Presenters who are not employed by a law school may attend the day of the session at no charge. They may pay the AALS member registration fee if they wish to attend more than one day. No funds are available for reimbursement of travel expenses for non-law/non-clinical faculty presenters on workshops.

VI. AALS Section on Clinical Education Committee Meetings

AALS Section on Clinical Legal Education Committee meetings will take place at 8 am on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. We will also offer space for morning self-care/wellness sessions. If you would like to lead a self-care/wellness session, please contact Lauren Rogal at lauren.rogal@vanderbilt.edu.

V. Questions

If you have questions, please feel free to contact any member of the Planning Committee. Thank you for your interest in participating as a presenter at the conference. We very much look forward to seeing you in Portland in May 2026!

2026 AALS Conference on Clinical Legal Education Planning Committee

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Alina Ball, University of California, Berkeley School of Law
Dena Bauman, Cornell Law School
Sarah R. Boonin, Suffolk University Law School
Andrew Budzinski, American University, Washington College of Law
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