

Ziyi (Richard) Zhu

richardzhu2026@u.northwestern.edu | linkedin.com/in/rzhux | github.com/richardzhu | richardzhu.com

Profile

Northwestern Legal Studies and Physics senior with federal defense experience, focused on GenAI legal technology evaluation, pilot support, workflow troubleshooting, adoption documentation, and reviewable legal-data systems.

Education

Northwestern University - Evanston, IL
B.A. in Legal Studies and Physics; Minor in Classics; GPA 3.6/4.0
Sep 2023 - Jun 2026

Legal & Technical Experience

Federal Defender Program, N.D. Ill. - Chicago, IL
Mitigation Intern, selected as sole undergraduate intern
Jun 2025 - Aug 2025

- Spearheaded the office's first GenAI adoption initiative; evaluated Claude, ChatGPT, and legal-specific AI tools against confidentiality protocols and casework needs; delivered a 41-page implementation roadmap with training guidance and a 60-minute live demonstration of reviewable case-analysis workflows to senior office leadership.
- Authored a 17-page sealed mitigation memorandum cited by the sentencing judge, contributing to a 45 percent sentence reduction below the Sentencing Guidelines; conducted client interviews and synthesized 1,500+ pages of medical records, grand jury testimony, and social science research into attorney-facing memos and exhibits.
- Led a 72-hour emergency housing intervention for a newly released client with no viable placement options; executed 140+ calls and emails across halfway houses, shelters, and social-service providers in WI, IL, and IN, producing a regional denial record that informed release planning.

Honors Thesis: Judicial Relief in Seventh Circuit Criminal Appeals - Evanston, IL
Researcher / Data Analyst
Sep 2025 - Mar 2026

- Built an AI-augmented structured extraction pipeline from scratch, converting 1,591 federal appellate decisions into a judge-identifying dataset covering panel membership, publication status, posture, issue type, offense, and outcomes.
- Designed schema-enforced extraction, model-output evaluation, and manual audit checks across 12 large language model configurations and 15 JSON schema iterations, producing reviewable outputs for nontechnical legal readers.
- Analyzed judicial relief patterns using a hierarchical Bayesian GLMM, finding that institutional constraints and procedural factors, rather than judicial ideology, explained most observed variation in outcomes.

Book of Changes Studio - Chicago, IL
Full-stack AI Developer
Oct 2024 - Present

- Built and deployed a bilingual AI knowledge platform using Next.js, FastAPI, Supabase, and OpenAI API, with auth, per-user quotas, cloud history, and a normalized 450-slot SQL database for source-linked, reviewable outputs.
- Designed model-controlled follow-up chat with capability gating, prompt customization, transcript logging, usage telemetry, and persistent session history to support user adoption, troubleshooting, and auditable AI workflows.

Geospatial Data Platform - Chicago, IL
AI Developer
Sep 2025 - Present

- Built a full-stack geospatial analytics platform for multi-year Google Timeline data, including Python/FastAPI processing, Deck.gl visualization, user privacy controls, secure share links, and iOS companion app development.

Additional Experience

Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) - Beijing, CN
Investment Banking Intern
Aug 2024 - Sep 2024

- Built a Python workflow to audit claims from 10 water utilities against government environmental and infrastructure datasets, flagging diligence exceptions for review.
- Co-authored investment committee memos on regulatory risk for 3 semiconductor startups benchmarked against U.S. market and export-control data.

Kartemquin Films - Chicago, IL
Producer
Oct 2025 - May 2026

- Built a source-traceable editorial database from 50+ fragmented public materials, converting media coverage, writings, screenshots, and external references into a dated, linked corpus for factual research and editorial review.

Skills

Python, JavaScript, SQL, APIs, JSON Schemas, Git; Claude, OpenAI/Codex, prompt iteration, model evaluation, LLM workflows, RAG, user guides, troubleshooting; Westlaw, LexisNexis, PACER, Bluebook. Mandarin native; Japanese N3.