

The Honorable Brad A. Weinreb

SOC 159: Special Topics

Law: A View from the Bench General Syllabus

Welcome Students!!

This course explores how we view our courts and judicial system, often based on, or affected by popular culture. Our focus will be on film or movies as a medium of popular culture. In other words, we will discuss specific judicial and legal concepts through the prism of movies and TV! We will challenge our beliefs and gain an appreciation for how the judicial system acts and reacts in the effort to ensure due process and a fair administration of justice. And as a judicial officer I hope to bring you some unique insight into the courts and the judicial process ...

General information: Your instructor is The Honorable Judge Brad A. Weinreb, San Diego Superior Court. My Office hours are by appointment. You may reach me via email at [bweinreb@ucsd.edu](mailto:bweinreb@ucsd.edu). You may also call my courtroom department D5 and leave a message with my courtroom clerk Susan Smith, at 760-201-8005.

The assigned book is Asimow & Mader, Law and Popular Culture—A Course Book (second edition 2013) ("LPC"). Available in the bookstore before school begins.

Grading structure: The course is split into a hybrid mode with one a day a week in-person. There will be asynchronous requirements (on your own time but before our scheduled class) and a live in-person synchronous weekly class where we will discuss what you did in your assignment. The course does not have a mid-term; instead, there are weekly graded assignments as well as a final paper. The basic structure is as follows:

- **Pre-class Assignment (20%):** Each week you will have a pre-class assignment to do on your own time, but before class: along with our weekly movie, you will watch a power-point or a pre-recorded lecture and then answer questions posted to Canvas about our assigned weekly content. You will then submit your pre-class response via Canvas. This is due no later than 6 pm the day before our in-person class meeting. These submissions are worth 20% of your final grade. *NOTE: I do not accept late submissions - your responses shape and guide class discussion. If you want credit, submit responses no later than the day before our class.*
- **Post-class (40%):** After our in-person class, there will be post-discussion board questions you submit to Canvas. Your responses are due by Saturday at 11:59pm. That gives you the entire week to prepare responses but I suggest you do them immediately after class while material is fresh and so you don't conflict with the pre-class assignment for the next upcoming class. *NOTE: Because this grade is based on the class discussion I hope you will join us each week. If you want full credit you'll need to submit the assignment it on time. You may receive partial credit if you submit it late, or, if you missed the*

*class and want to submit the post-class assignment, you will need to also submit a one-page (500 word) summary of the class along with the assignment - which means getting or reviewing class notes from another student).*

- Final Paper (40%): Due at the end of term.

Assigned content. Each week and before each class you will read selected portions of LPC, watch an assigned movie and/or a power-point presentation and then submit your pre-class responses on Canvas. These will all be pre-loaded onto Canvas. After class you will submit responses to the discussion board questions.

Your assigned movies are also available on UCSD digital reserve in the Library.

Preparation. There is little preparation needed - as we all have probably watched TV or films on or about the legal system! But you may find it helpful to start watching some TV shows about the law and lawyers. Catch an episode or two of television series such as *How to Get Away with Murder*, *The Good Fight*, *Suits*, or *Better Call Saul*, or mini-series like *Billions* or *Goliath*. Or watch some law-related movies (just not those in our syllabus yet) such as the comedic *Legally Blonde* and *My Cousin Vinny* or the legal thriller *Dark Waters*. Some newer films you might enjoy are *Just Mercy*, *Denial*, *Woman in Gold*, *The Accused*, *Devil's Advocate*, *North Country*, *A Few Good Men*, *Roman J. Israel*, or *Michael Clayton*. Consider older movies for comparison of treatment such as *Inherit the Wind*, *Breaker Morant*, or *Witness for the Prosecution*. There are many others.

Final paper. The final paper is a maximum 1500 words (about 6-doubled spaced pages) on any subject of your choosing relating to both law (broadly defined) and popular culture (broadly defined and not limited to movies or TV). Additional requirements and potential topic issues for you to consider to be addressed in actual course syllabus.

Tentative class schedule. This is a tentative organization of sessions with assigned readings. Canvas assignments and discussion links will provide specific information.

\*Class 1. Introduction to law and popular culture. We will also conduct an overview on courts and the judicial system.

\*Class 2. Overview of the adversary system and the trial genre. Assignment: Watch *Anatomy of a Murder*. Read LPC Chapter 2. Watch Power-point: Criminal Process.

\*Class 3. Good Lawyers/Bad Lawyers. Assignment: Watch *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Verdict*. Read LPC: Chapter 4 and LPC ¶¶3.08.1.

\*Class 4. Criminal justice system. Assignment: Watch *Lincoln Lawyer*. Read LPC chapter 8 (but not pp. 153-58) and ¶¶7.01 and 7.02 (pp. 124-132). Watch Criminal Trial Power-point, Plea Bargain Power-point.

\*Class 5. The Jury. Assignment: Watch *12 Angry Men*. Read LPC ch 9. Watch The Jury power-point.

\*Class 6. The Civil Justice system. Assignment: Watch *A Civil Action*. Read LPC ch. 12 (but not pp. 241-49). Watch Civil Procedure Power-point.

\*Class 7. Judicial ethics, unique courtroom issues and addressing bias. Assignment: Watch Courtroom Ethics Power-point, Elder Abuse Power-point. Implicit Bias Video.

\*Class 8. Civil Rights. Assignment. Watch *Philadelphia*. Read LPC ch. 13 and ¶10.06. Watch Civil Rights Power-point.

\*Class 9. Family Law. Assignment: Watch *Kramer vs. Kramer*. Read LPC ch.14. Watch Child Custody and DVPA Power-points.

\*Class 10. Final Class Wrap-up. Final Papers support class. Submit pre-class response.

\*Final Papers due by 11:59pm on last class day of final exam period. Submit on Canvas. Turnitin.com academic integrity software will be used.