

COURSE TITLE: LAW, LAWYERS AND JUSTICE IN AMERICAN MOVIES

Responsible Faculty Instructor:

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Designation: Professor and Vice Dean, Jindal Global Law School

Credits: 4

Credits Type: Law

Cross-registration: Open to All Schools

Pre-requisites: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION (COURSE VISION):

This course examines the portrayal of law, lawyers, and justice in American cinema, focusing on films that depict courtroom dramas, investigations, and the legal process. It will explore how accurately films represent the justice system and analyze how popular cinema shapes public perceptions and expectations regarding lawyers, trials, and the pursuit of truth and justice. Through screenings, readings, and discussions, students will develop critical perspectives on the cultural and ethical dimensions of law as represented in film.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY:

- **Film Screenings:** Core films screened in class, followed by critical discussion.
- **Assigned Readings:** Contextual and theoretical materials provided in advance.
- **Class Discussions:** Dialogical exploration of films and themes.
- **Written Work:** Research paper, reflective essays, and in-class tests.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Critically evaluate the representation of law and lawyers in American cinema.
2. Understand how films influence public opinion on justice and legal institutions.
3. Compare cinematic portrayals of trials with actual legal processes.
4. Analyze the ethical and cultural dimensions of justice as represented on screen.
5. Conduct independent research on law, justice, and cinema.

READING LIST (upto 10 select readings):

1. Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (1995).
2. Desmond Manderson, *Danse Macabre: Temporalities of Law in the Visual Arts* (2019).
3. Anthony Chase, *Movies on Trial: The Legal System on the Silver Screen* (2002).
4. Austin Sarat (ed.), *Law in the Domains of Culture* (2000).
5. Paul Bergman & Michael Asimow, *Reel Justice: The Courtroom Goes to the Movies* (2nd ed., 2006).
6. Richard Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop: The Vanishing Line Between Law and Popular Culture* (2000).
7. Orit Kamir, *Framed: Women in Law and Film* (2006).
8. Jessica Silbey, *Law and Justice on the Small Screen* (2012).
9. Steven Greenfield, Guy Osborn & Peter Robson, *Film and the Law: The Cinema of Justice* (2010).

WEEKLY READING PLAN (WEEKLY OUTLINE):

Modules	Week(s)
Module 1: Introduction to Law and Cinema • Public perceptions and representations	Week 1
Module 2: Courtroom as Drama • <i>12 Angry Men</i> (1957), <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> (1962)	Week 2
Module 3: Trials of Justice • <i>Inherit the Wind</i> (1960), <i>Anatomy of a Murder</i> (1959)	Week 3
Module 4: Justice on Trial • <i>Judgment at Nuremberg</i> (1961), <i>And Justice for All</i> (1979)	Week 4
Module 5: Law, Race, and Civil Rights • <i>Philadelphia</i> (1993), <i>Amistad</i> (1997), <i>A Time to Kill</i> (1996)	Week 5
Module 6: Lawyers as Heroes and Antiheroes • <i>The Verdict</i> (1982), <i>Primal Fear</i> (1996)	Week 6
Module 7: Women, Law, and Justice • <i>Erin Brockovich</i> (2000), <i>The Best of Enemies</i> (2019)	Week 7
Module 8: Law, Ethics, and Responsibility • <i>Compulsion</i> (1959), <i>Beyond a Reasonable Doubt</i> (1956)	Week 8
Module 9: Law and Politics • <i>Marshall</i> (2017), <i>Ghosts of Mississippi</i> (1996)	Week 9
Module 10: Wrongful Conviction and Justice • <i>Call Northside 777</i> (1948), <i>I Want to Live</i> (1958)	Week 10
Module 11: Morality, Guilt, and Confession • <i>I Confess</i> (1953), <i>The Confession</i> (1999)	Week 11
Module 12: Justice Denied • <i>Fury</i> (1936), <i>The Denial</i> (2016)	Week

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Module 13: Comedy, Satire, and Justice • <i>My Cousin Vinny</i> (1992)	Week 13
Revision Week	Week 14