

Joseph Mello
jmello1@depaul.edu
Office Hours: M,W 9:30-11:00
Office: 990 Fullerton, Room 2216

PSC 265
Winter 2015
Arts and Letters Hall # 313
M, W: 1:00-2:30

LAW AND POPULAR CULTURE

Despite the importance of law in a democratic society, most citizens have very little direct contact with the legal system. Instead, we typically develop our understanding of what the law is and how it works through our interactions with the medium of popular culture. This course explores popular portrayals of a variety of legal topics in order to better appreciate how everyday understandings of the law are transmitted to us through movies, television shows, and popular wisdom. The goal of this course is for the student to be able to identify and understand how legal meaning is socially constructed, and be able to critically engage the normative implications of these constructions.

MATERIALS

There are four required texts for this course. All of these texts are available for purchase in the university bookstore or online. Additional required reading materials will be made available on D2L throughout the semester.

Turrow, Scott. 1977. *One L: The Turbulent True Story of a First Year at Harvard Law School.* Warner Books.

Sundby, Scott. 2005. *A Life and Death Decision: A Jury Weighs the Death Penalty.* Macmillan.

Rios, Victor M. 2011. *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys.* New York University Press.

Moskos, Peter. 2008. *Cop in the Hood: My Year Policing Baltimore's Eastern District.* Princeton University Press.

GRADING

Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%
Discussion papers (5% each)	25%
Participation and Assignments	<u>15%</u>
	100%

Exams: Your performance on exams will account for 60% of your overall grade for this course. These exams will consist of in-class essays that must be completed within a specified time frame. The exams will be open-book, and will not be comprehensive.

Discussion Papers: Students will be expected to complete 5 weekly writing assignments reflecting on course readings over the course of the term. I will post discussion questions on D2L each week, and ask you to write a 1-2 page essay answering any *one* of these questions. There will be 10 total weeks worth of discussion questions, meaning students may skip 5 weeks without penalty. These short essays should include a thesis statement which is supported with at least one citation from the course readings. Hard copies of these essays are due in class every Wednesday. Answers to discussion questions will account for 25% of your grade for the course.

Participation and Attendance: Regular and attentive class attendance is necessary to succeed in this course. Students are allowed 2 unexcused absences without penalty. Each additional unexcused absence will result in a 10% reduction in your participation grade. Students who miss class due to illness or other significant personal circumstance are required to complete the Absence Notification Process through the Dean of Students Office (Student Center #307 & DePaul Center #11001) in order to have their absence excused. Students are expected to come to class ready to participate meaningfully in class discussions. This means you have carefully read all required readings.

Late Assignment Policy: Students who miss class for a legitimate reason must inform me in advance, and provide documentation from the Dean of Student's Office excusing the absence. Students with excused absences may be allowed to make up work without penalty. Otherwise, I will accept late papers up to 3 days after the due date. Late papers will receive a 10% penalty for each day they are late.

Academic Integrity: Any occasion of academic dishonesty, large or small, on *any* assignment, will result in failure for the assignment and/or the entire course and disciplinary action. Work done for this course must adhere to the University Academic Integrity Policy, which you can review in the Student Handbook or by visiting Academic Integrity at DePaul University (<http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>). Please note that ignorance of prevailing academic conventions or of DePaul's policies is never an excuse for a violation.

Students with Disabilities: Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling you to access accommodations and support services to assist your success. For more information please visit www.studentaffairs.depaul.edu/csd. Students are also invited to contact me privately to discuss your challenges and how I may assist in facilitating the accommodations you will use in this course. This is best done early in the term and our conversation will remain confidential.

A Note on Writing: This course requires students to complete a variety of writing assignments. Good writing is a process which takes time— you should never turn in a piece of writing that has not been thoroughly reviewed and revised beforehand. I am happy to discuss written work with you during office hours and will review rough drafts sent to me in advance. If you need additional help with writing assignments you might want to contact the writing center to schedule a face-to-face meeting or get feedback on written work (www.depaul.edu/writing).

January 7 Ewick and Silbey, “Common Knowledge and Ideological Critique” (D2L***)

PART I: LAWYERS AND THE LEGAL SYSTEM

LAW SCHOOL AND LEGAL EDUCATION

January 12 *Legally Blonde* (movie)
Scott Turow, *One L* pp ix-69

January 14 Scott Turow, *One L* pp 69-148

January 19 Scott Turow, *One L* pp 149-231

January 21 Scott Turrow, *One L* pp 233-288
“The Collapse of Big Law” (D2L***)
“The Legal 1%” (D2L***)
Please visit the website: <http://lawschooltransparency.com/>

THE “LITIGATION CRISIS”

January 26 John Stosell, “The Trouble with Lawyers” (video)
This American Life “The Squeaky Wheelchair gets the Grease” (podcast)
Sally Merry, “Going to Court” (D2L***)

January 28 David Engel, “The Oven Bird’s Song” (D2L***)

February 2 Michael McCann, “Java Jive” (D2L***)
Midterm Exam Review

February 4 ***** MIDTERM EXAMINATION*****

PART II: CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

JURY TRIAL AND THE DEATH PENALTY

February 9 *12 Angry Men* (movie)
Scott Sundby, *A Life and Death Decision* pp 1-58

February 11 Scott Sundby, *A Life and Death Decision* pp 59-132

February 16 Scott Sundby, *A Life and Death Decision* pp 133-188

PORTRAYALS OF CRIME

February 18 *Dark Knight* (movie)
Victor Rios, *Punished* pp vii-xvi; 3-23

February 23 *Dark Knight* (movie)
 Victor Rios, *Punished* pp 24-73

February 25 Victor Rios, *Punished* pp 74-123

March 2 Victor Rios, *Punished* pp 124-167

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE WAR ON DRUGS

March 4 *The Wire*, “Episode 1” (television show)
 Peter Moskos, *Cop in the Hood* pp 1-63

March 9 Peter Moskos, *Cop in the Hood* pp 64-110

March 11 Peter Moskos, *Cop in the Hood* pp 111-196
 Final Exam Review

*****FINAL EXAM TBA*****