

## COLLOQUIUM: REEL JUSTICE

This colloquium examines how American films since World War II have explored the issues of law and justice in our society. Each week we will see a film, read a number of articles that focus on the film and discuss our own perspectives on what we have seen and read.

We will focus on a series of questions raised by the films, including, whether their makers have tended to romanticize the American legal system, especially the role of juries, lawyers and judges. Have they been sufficiently sensitive to issues of race, gender and class? Do particular themes tend to dominate this genre, such as the redemptive quality of legal practice?

One book is recommended for the course and available in the University Bookstore: **John Denvir, *Legal Reelism: Movies as Legal Texts***. You should read it casually beginning in week one. The key readings for each film or set of films are on electronic reserve in the Geisel Library and can be downloaded over your computer. They are identified by ++.

A 12-15 page paper is due in the tenths week of class. The topic, either on a single film or a group of films, should be discussed with me prior to making a choice. In addition to the paper, each student will be assessed on the basis of class preparation and contributions to discussions.

### Assignment

#### **Week I: (March 31)**

##### **Readings: J. Elkins,**

**++ Elkins, "Popular Culture: Legal Films and Legal Film Critics"**

**++N. Rosenberg, "Law and Popular Culture"**

**++ S. Machura, "Law in Films"**

#### **Week II (April 7)**

##### **Film: The Ox Bow Incident**

##### **Readings:**

**++George Bluestone, "The Ox Bow Incident"**

**++R. Felix, "The Ox Bow Incident"**

**++H. Tepker, "The Ox Bow Incident"**

**++M.B. Crain, "The Ox Bow Incident Revisited"**

**Week III (April 14)**

**Film: Matewan**

**Readings:**

**++J. Newsinger, "Matewan: Film and Working Class Struggle"**

**++M. Margronis, "Film Review of Matewan"**

**++Stephen Brier, "A History Film Without Much History"**

**W.Churchill, "From the Pinkertons to the Patriot Act"**

**Week IV (April 21)**

**Film: 12 Angry Men**

**Readings:**

**++V. Hans, "12 Angry Men Versus The Empirical Reality of Juries"**

**++M. Hoffman, "The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 12 Angry Men"**

**++N. Marder, "Introduction to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 12 Angry Men"**

**++M. Asimow, "12 Angry Men: A Revisionist View"**

**++ D. Burnett, "The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 12 Angry Men"**

**++C. Clover, "Movie Juries"**

**Week V (April 28)**

**Film: To Kill a Mockingbird**

**Readings:**

**++M. Asimow, "When Lawyers Were Heroes"**

**++T. Dare, "Lawyers, Ethics and To Kill a Mockingbird"**

**++M. Holcomb, "To Kill a Mockingbird"**

**++Letter to the Editor, "The Redemption of Atticus Finch"**

**++J. Crespino, "The Strange Career of Atticus Finch"**

**++J. Nickel, "Disabling African-American Men"**

**Week VI (May 5)**

**Film: Anatomy of a Murder**

**Readings:**

**++P. Verrone, "The 12 Best Movie Trials"**

**++J. Sullivan, "Imagining Justice"**

**++D. Thompson, "Impulse"**

**++A. Chase, "Lawyers in Popular Culture"**

**Week VII (May 12)**

**Film: And Justice for All**

**Readings:**

**++J. Elkins, "Law in Film/Film in Law"**

**++M. Asimow, "Bad Lawyers in the Movies"**

**Week VIII (May 19)**

**Film: Dead Man Walking**

**Readings:**

**++D. Dow, "Fictional Documentaries, Truthful Fictions"**

**++P. Berman, "The Cultural Life of Capital Punishment"**

**++R. Harding, "Celluloid Death"**

**Week IX (May 26)**

**Film: A Civil Action**

**Readings:**

**++A. Sarat, "The Hidden Domains of Civil Justice"**

**Week X (June 2)**

**Film: The Sweet Hereafter**

**Readings:**

**++J. Olvhowy, "Russell Banks' The Sweet Hereafter"**

**++T. McAdams, "Blame and the Sweet Hereafter"**